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ABSTRACT

This book consists of 33 short articles dealing with the broad topic of school-community relations. It is aimed primarily at readers who are engaged in or preparing for leadership positions in school administration. Because many of the articles are specifically relevant to the state of Tennessee, the book's value will be somewhat limited for readers in other states. (JG)

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READINGS
IN
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
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EDITOR

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"Keep the schools and the government of the schools close to the people so that the citizens generally, including parents and taxpayers, may know what their schools are doing, may have an effective voice in the school program"

FOREWORD

It's an unusual privilege and certainly a rare pleasure to write the foreword for this series of essays produced by my peers who serve on that "far flung battle line" of Tennessee education. As the readers of this volume will note, these authors are engaged daily in the practice of teaching and administering; their ideas are grounded in the reality of our times. Why do they write? Writing costs time and at least a little money. Isn't it a fine feeling though to know that you can put your ideas into a consistent and meaningful whole or pattern that is useful to you and others? The architect has to draw it; the artist has to paint it; but we educators have to spell it out. And isn't it good to know how effectively we can orally share our ideas after having clarified them through writing? Yes, there are good reasons for all of us writing, especially if we are anxious to share our ideas within the profession and with the public at large.

Writing to clarify your own ideas is a form of self-communication. You must be reasonably sure you have clear, logical, understandable ideas before trying to communicate your thoughts with others. Communicating in this fashion is an invitation to others to reply in kind: to give careful criticism of your ideas or to present differing ideas aimed at the same objective. In any case, persons who are clear, logical and understandable in their oral and written communication are always viewed as persons who would like to receive messages of similar kind.

Believe it or not, dear reader, the above paragraphs are of grave concern to each of us, assuming of course that we also have ideas to clarify and share. After reading this volume, why not communicate, either directly or through the Editor, with those authors whose ideas stimulate you. And above all, why not "demand equal time" and space from the Editor in the next issue. Is there to be a next issue? Of course there is, especially if you and I and others on the "firing line" want it. Just ask the Editor or the Tennessee School Boards Association (The TSBA is interested because it knows the value of sharing educational ideas on the public front).

Dr. Peters asked me to write this, but didn't draw the limits of my operation. I boldly propose that we pin the responsibility on him for managing the continuation of this venture just for those who want to exchange ideas on the improvement of education. We could have meetings and speeches, but we are "so weary of so many" just now. Writing is a better medium of communicating basic ideas than is speaking. Besides, it presents ideas in a format available

to each concerned individual at will; and it also gives a person an opportunity to carefully re-think and re-write his own ideas before answering back.

Throughout this discussion dealing with the vital part writing plays in communication, our great professional need for sharing ideas in writing, and the direct plea for continuing this publication, I have not forgotten that this issue is dedicated to the need for increased communication as basic to public understanding and support of education. Viewed in terms of our fundamental concept of "government of, by and for the people" such communication is vital for education and, hence, for our national welfare. Today there is literally a flood of written communication in education. I suggest that very little of it communicates clearly, logically or even fairly (much of it is half-truth) to the educator or layman. I believe that educators and laymen like to hear from respected teachers, administrators, and others who work at "home base." People always listen to those whom they know and trust. Thus, this publication can expect, now and in the future, to be highly influential among both professional educators and interested laymen.

In the face of the high percentage of negative "jabberwocky" available in books, magazines and newspapers, education is in greater demand, from preschool through college, than ever before; and the increasing demand from adults for "life-long education" is one of the truly great cultural changes of our times. We need more of a positive front in our communication with the public about what is happening in education. This publication is a case in point; it deserves wide distribution among the profession and interested laymen.

To all those involved in the success of this venture, and to all readers who get involved with the ideas presented, I offer

My sincere regards and best wishes,

Orin B. Graff, Ph.D.
Distinguished Service Professor
Emeritus, The University of Tennessee
Knoxville

PREFACE

This book of readings in school-community relations was prepared for a particular reader audience, at a particular time, and for a particular geographical region. It should be of interest and value to those who are engaged in or preparing for leadership positions in public school administration. It is also the logical hope of the editor that the readers of this collection will be stimulated to analyze their own situations and to plan for their own improvement.

A major importance of this collection lies with the many readings that are relevant to the period of the mid-1970's in the State of Tennessee. There are potential hazards, of course, to such a presumption. First among these is the variety of reactions which may be directed to the editorial selection. Second, there is the immediate danger that the points of view expressed by the authors may not be relevant in all places at all times.

Overriding these potential dangers, however, are (1) the assumption that the accessibility to new ideas is paramount to change, (2) the belief that the many relationships between the school and its publics can be improved, and (3) the faith that improved relationships will lead to greater support of public education.

The editor appreciates the cooperation given in this project by the individual authors, all of whom have written from knowledge gained through personal experience rather than knowledge by description--an important difference in understanding. Appreciation is also expressed to the several professional educators who reviewed the articles prior to publication and to the Tennessee School Boards Association. Finally, the editor and the authors are especially indebted to Mrs. Billie M. Dupre for her typing of the manuscript and for her constructive criticism.

R. M. P.

In this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.

Abraham Lincoln

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL COUNSELOR: A FAR-REACHING INFLUENCE
IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

by
Margaret Anderson
Senior Counselor
Clinton Senior High School

A good public school counselor can be a tremendous asset to a school and a community. A poor counselor can do much harm. While there is, even today, substantial disagreement as to the responsibilities of counselors in public schools, perhaps because too much has been expected, basically counseling is a "helping profession" which really came of age in America with the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. By this Act, the nation acknowledged the vital links between education, manpower needs, and the national defense. It recognized that the development of our youth is our greatest national resource, and made possible the wide-spread institution of guidance programs in the public schools. These programs included the employment of counselors, persons specially trained to help young people to succeed in school. While counseling has taken on an expanded role since the 1960's, I do not believe anyone closely involved with youth today could doubt the necessity for quality counseling in the public schools. And certainly, a competent, well-trained, and dedicated counselor is the heart of any guidance program.

When life was simpler, students did not have need of guidance programs and school counselors so much as today. Communities were closely knit, and provided an adequate background for growing up. The school curriculum was very much structured so that pupils had few choices. Work was not so specialized and people were less mobile. A child received help from many sources as a

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part of his growing up. He was counseled in a serious way by his parents, grandparents, and teachers. Moreoften, he followed in the footsteps of his parents who accepted the full responsibility of providing further education or an apprenticeship.

But the child growing up today does not have so structured and secure a background. The world of work in an age of computers, jets, and nuclear power has become very complex. Few parents are able to advise their children of available opportunities and the training required to receive those opportunities. Teachers, of necessity, are so specialized in their own disciplines that they do not have the time nor is it possible to be knowledgeable in the many fields without special study. A child grows up today against a shifting and uncertain background in which perhaps the only real certainty is change. Against this background, the counselor begins his work.

I have never seen the guidance offices of a public school as psychiatric clinics or social agencies. The resources are insufficient. Neither can a counselor be "all things to all people." But rather, I see the guidance program as a very necessary and valuable part of the total school curriculum through which pupils are helped to understand their potential and their limitations so they can succeed in school and make the most of themselves. I believe that the major emphasis of public school guidance today should be within the confines of the school situation. Since the counselor deals mainly with education, he should, to my mind, be an educator as well as a counselor, and concerned mainly with the benefits of learning, the decisions and choices a student makes, and the experiences he receives in school. Success in school, more often than not, leads to success in the after-school years.

With this philosophy, which of course is a personal one, the purpose becomes clear: to help each child succeed in school so that he can make the most of himself. I am concerned about the individual good and the collective good. It sounds simple, but in truth, it is the most complicated, many-faceted, but the highest form of teaching because it involves the day-to-day development of each pupil, who is unique in his own right. And in the process, the counselor supplements and strengthens the work of the parents, teachers, and administrators.

While it would be impossible in this space to list the many activities involved in a counselor's duties, I would consider the following major responsibilities:

(1) The counselor will first make every attempt to form an accurate appraisal and understanding of each pupil's talents and abilities and limitations in so far as is possible. This understanding is paramount to any planning, advising, and directing. He will do this through the use of tests, analyzing records, learning of the pupil's experiences, holding conferences with the student, his parents and teachers so that he can help the student plan wisely

and channel his energies constructively. This is a continuous process and obviously more advantageous to the student when begun in the elementary school and extending into post-secondary education.

(2) In order to advise the student and his parents effectively, the counselor must have a good knowledge of the curriculum of the school and participate in the development of the curriculum. He is the one person in the school who, more than likely, will have to interpret the curriculum to the parents and the community. In his contacts with hundreds of students day to day he is able to see at first hand how the courses and activities offered, and the teaching and school conditions in general affect the pupils. He is at an excellent vantage point to evaluate the curriculum, recommend changes and additions to administrators, and help create an atmosphere wherein children can learn.

(3) He will act as a repository of facts and information (or know where to find them) on careers, educational opportunities, and the services of community and other agencies so that he can refer his students when necessary or advantageous. He is sufficiently trained to recognize when the child needs more specialized services and knows how to help him secure them.

(4) He becomes an advisor to parents as well as to the pupils by helping to keep them informed of their children's progress in school. He will help them weather the often stormy, difficult teen-age years of their children in whatever way he can. He knows that as each child grows and develops he is faced with many situations and problems in which he may need personal help. The counselor will be available at all times.

(5) He will aid the student and his parents in the important decisions of post-high school planning and provide information so that those financially unable to go on can receive help. He will provide placement services for those going directly from school to work. He is in constant touch with employers in the area and knows of their needs and requirements. He is able to answer questions employers may have concerning the school program.

In short, the counselor becomes a liaison between the teachers and the family--between the family, the student and other referral agencies--between the student and higher institutions of learning--and between the student and the world of work. As such, he has need of the help of many people and agencies, and he must cultivate and maintain good working relationships with all of these people.

No other person in the school is more directly involved in such a personal way with the student and his family and other patrons of the school. The relationships are more often relationships of a very lasting nature, extending over long periods. If those relationships have been constructive and congenial, the community will respect the work of the counselor and have a much better

understanding of the school's purposes. It is for this reason that a real counselor will never underestimate the dimensions of his influence and ever be on guard that his influence is used in the most ethical and professional manner.

As I have observed the process of school counseling over the years (and each day in the realization that so little is accomplished in comparison to how much could and should be done), I believe now the most beneficial role a school counselor can perform is in helping the student develop what I term "a sense of direction" to his life with faith that he does have an important contribution to make to himself and to his community. Because he is a human being, he is worthy and he can be useful. This goal, to my mind, is necessary for the moral integrity of us all.

Counseling is a very challenging and rewarding profession--one not to be taken lightly nor engaged in as a sideline. In its deeper aspects it involves all that is good and wholesome, and all that is shady and frail in the human condition into which our children are born and must forge their ambitions and dreams.

* * *

"I do not want the peace which passeth understanding; I want the understanding which bringeth peace."

Helen Keller

PARENTAL SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS
OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

by
Katherine S. Blackwell
Middle School Teacher, Riverdale Elementary
Shelby County School System

In the fall of 1973, two teams of teachers at Riverdale decided to "open-up" their program. They decided on a self-scheduling time arrangement with the idea of eventually evolving into two interdisciplinary teams. They met among themselves, with the school administration and with central office personnel, and then decided to go ahead with the self-scheduling program with everyone's approval. As an afterthought, they decided perhaps it would be a good idea to have a parents' meeting to explain the new program. The teachers really didn't think the meeting was too necessary because, after all, they were professionals, hired to teach these children; and the parents certainly should go along with whatever they decided to do.

Well, the faculty had a wide awakening coming. Not only did the parents not blindly go along with their innovative program but the teachers were met with open hostility. The parents were up in arms about what was going on at school because they did not understand and they were afraid that their children were not learning. The teachers did not feel it was their job to do public relations work with the parents but rather to teach the children to the best of their ability. The only complication with this attitude was that with the parents' hostile and fearful attitude toward school and the teachers, the children were not learning as they could and should. The students reflected their parents' attitudes, which caused all sorts of problems for the entire program. There were so many problems, in fact, that the first year that the self-scheduling team was in effect, it was a failure as far as most of the parents were concerned. A comparison was made between the gains made while students were in the self-

KATHERINE S. BLACKWELL has been a teacher in the Shelby County School System since 1969, teaching in kindergarten and the middle school. She has participated in several teacher workshops regarding non-verbal communication and interdisciplinary team teaching. She holds the B.S. degree from Memphis State University and the M.S. degree from The University of Tennessee.

scheduling program against gains made while students were in a traditional departmentalized program. There was no difference between the results of either program. Quite a few parents, however, were convinced that their children had wasted an entire year.

The teachers organized parents' meetings in the spring to try to undo the damage that had been done by not educating the parents as to what was going on at school. It was too late to accomplish much for that school year, however, because by this time both sides (parents and teachers) were so hostile and defensive toward each other that they both forgot that the only reason for any of their being there was to educate the children. The situation had turned instead into a battle between the parents and the teachers.

Somehow everyone made it through the end of the year without any horrible consequences.

School personnel realized that something must be done to change the attitude of the parents if this new program were going to work. The principal began speaking to as many groups in the community as he could about the advantages of the program and the school in general.

When school opened in the fall of 1974, an alternative program, consisting of a departmentalized team and a self-scheduling team, was offered to the students and parents. It was very evident that the public relations program which began in the summer was taking effect. Some of the parents had said they would be surprised if five students signed up for the self-scheduling team. It was full; in fact, a few students were turned away. This year the faculty had learned its lesson and so began the year with parents' meetings; also, parents were encouraged to become involved in the overall program. The more parents who taught a knitting or chess class in the exploratory program or gave a talk on a foreign country they might have visited, the more loyal supporters the program had.

Now in the third year of operation, the "team" has practically no complaints. The two programs, interdisciplinary and departmentalized, complement each other. Both programs are successful. Of course, part of the success is due to the fact that the teachers are better acquainted with the program but just as important is the fact that both teams now have the overall support of the parents and community.

A program, no matter how well thought out and executed, will not succeed without the parents' backing. This experience seems to show how important it is to educate parents as to what is going on at school. Most people are afraid of the unknown but very supportive of anything "special"; the trick is to show the parents that the innovative program is something very special for their children and not some unknown, fearful, experiment being carried out on their children.

COOPERATIVE SCHOOL PLANNING: BASIC TO
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

Dr. Kermit W. Bowling, Director
Department of Physical Facilities
State Department of Education

This essay may appear to the reader to be about school architecture. Actually it is not. In tracing the evolution of school building construction in America, this essay attempts to emphasize the necessity for involving all segments of the community in the planning of better schools.

Pausing to take a Bicentennial look back over the last two centuries, Americans can easily see that school buildings have changed . . . plenty . . . and for the better, we think.

The public system of school in America has evolved largely through the influence of a changing community philosophy, purpose and program of the school, and a similar development in thinking of resulting design, aided and abetted by remarkable progress in all phases of technology.

The story of school architecture in America almost parallels all the various architectural trends which have left their impression on our communities, but not quite. When it was fashionable to borrow from the Greeks and Romans, schools borrowed from the Greeks and Romans. When Victorian jig-saw gingerbread became fashionable, schools put on a party dress of Victorian

DR. KERMIT BOWLING earned the Ed.D. and M.S. degrees at The University of Tennessee and his B.S. at Lincoln Memorial University. After military service and an elementary principalship in Anderson County, he joined the State Department of Education in 1963. In addition to being an adjunct professor at Tennessee State University and UT-Nashville, Dr. Bowling is regional chairperson of the Council of Educational Facilities Planners, commission member on the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and a member of the Tennessee Board of Building Code Appeals. He is one of 15 U.S. educators invited by the American Association of School Administrators to visit the United Kingdom in 1976 for a study of school facilities.

jig-saw gingerbread. As community enterprises, they were made into monuments by a post Civil War generation which had yet to learn that monuments are remembered only by pigeons.

19th Century Schools

In the 1800's most school boards retired behind closed doors and decided that a new school had to be built. They called in a local contractor who had some books to follow and instructed him to do one like the picture in the book. He was a practical soul and he knew what was needed. After all, schools were pretty much alike in design.

The needs of the educational program in the 19th century were relatively simple. And, anyway, technology had not yet found the solution answers to improved sanitation, lighting, heating, and other matters.

School had an objective job in those days--to teach reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic; to enforce obedience; and to inculcate moral precepts. Anything more was considered unnecessary. The method of that day has been described as the cistern type--the teacher pouring knowledge into the heads of his pupils. Such a program required a simple type of building, chiefly space for fixed benches and a teacher's desk at the front plus a space to hang wraps.

But "frills" began to appear in communities; parents wanted their sons to take manual training and their daughters to learn cooking. Not only frills but sheer size due to the growing importance of the times made the planning more complex, enough to bring architects into the picture--albeit apologetically and through the back door of aesthetic exterior decoration. Programming consisted of a statement that the building should have so many rooms and that so much money (too little) was available.

Nevertheless, these early school buildings were not altogether bad, even though they were usually designed for the pride of the community and not for the education of the children. They at least were planned around the classroom. The usual unit was, in effect, a box containing two or more classrooms, separated by a corridor. The high-silled windows allowed considerable daylight to enter the classrooms. No one expected a school building to be used during the dark hours, so artificial illumination was a necessity only for the janitor.

Fire hazards, particularly in buildings of two or more stories, were plentiful; and the fire drill was as much a part of the curriculum as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Toilets were alfresco and continued to linger outdoors even after sewerage systems had become commonplace in schools.

Early 20th Century Schools

The idea of relating a building to its function was not new in the early 1900's but more was done about it. It became a more acceptable practice to ask the superintendent to say what was needed to do a job. After all, he was there all day and should have some ideas. So, by 1910, shared planning by board, architect and superintendent was standard practice although a strong, strong bias toward the "practicality" of businessmen and contractors still lingered in most school districts.

School officials began to rebel against the risks and inefficiencies of the buildings in which America's children were spending an important part of their lives. They applied themselves to the problems of increased safety; they improved sanitation, reduced class size, and eliminated other obvious inadequacies of 19th century schools. Their agitation made sense, and community leaders slowly saw the light. Gradually, the average size dropped from 45 to 35. The danger of poor lighting was recognized, so without sufficient evidence standards were set up which provided that natural light should come from one side of a classroom, the left. Ceiling height was declared to be most desirable when it was half the width of the room. The classroom became standardized on dimensions of 22, 24, 26, by 30, 32 or 34 feet--dimensions dictated by the size of the class and by the fact that the class was still regimented into fixed rows of desks and seats.

For safety against the hazard of fire, the one-story school became acceptable. Where, for reasons of site, the building must be two or more stories, the use of non-combustible materials was strongly urged. These thinkers and planners made specific studies and recommendations concerning the steepness of stairs, the size of stair wells, the width of corridors, the width of doors, and the amount of fenestrations each room should require. Their work in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, and smaller cities furnished a flood of plans and buildings which aroused communities all over America to a more realistic approach to school design. The planning and designing of schools during the 1900-1930 period showed many improvements. But schools were still characterized by standardization, topped with lavish front entrances. Progress had not yet reached the point where the school building was designed for its pupils, tailor-made for its site and built to serve the community with utmost efficiency.

Functional Planning Developments

Yet some of the progressive thinkers began to visualize the design and construction of school buildings into dynamic educational machines, the adaptation of the educational thinking of John Dewey and his disciples to physical forms of brick and steel and wood and glass. This was reaction from the attitude,

still widely held, that the school is a warehouse for the efficient storage of children, under the care of polite and well-educated baby sitters.

The regimented and static-desk-teacher relationship began to be replaced by informality, with mobile furniture adaptable to group discussion or project work, and a varied stock of accessory facilities for painting, making toys, models, furniture, presenting plays, learning by doing.

Among the exciting developments which began to be felt in the first quarter of the 20th century leading to fundamental changes in the entire school program were: growing acceptance that children learn to do by doing; schools should help children to live better now than in some future day; pupils should have the opportunity to understand the environment in which they live; how to live with others has to be learned; schools have a stake in teaching how to make a living; music, arts, and handicrafts may be as important as reading and arithmetic; mental development is dependent in large measure upon proper health and physical development; learning to work together in groups is a necessary part of one's growth; education is concerned with the whole person and one part affects all the rest; schools are for all the children regardless of social or economic standing; schools are concerned primarily with present-day problems, not only those of the past; adults can learn as well as children, and their education is never completed; and, finally, the dawning understanding that the school exists to make communities better, not just to teach knowledge.

Such developments brought tremendous changes. More and more pupils came to schools and remained there for years. School programs were expanded to include provisions for teaching, health, physical education, arts and crafts, music, shop work and trades, science of all kinds, agriculture, homemaking, and other things. Hot lunches at school began to win acceptance and approval. Adults demanded that the school provide a program for their needs. And thus the school became a quite different type of institution.

At the same time, important discoveries and advancements in technology were taking place. Modern plumbing, heating, and ventilation were becoming practical and feasible. New uses were found for old materials, and new materials were being produced. Electricity had developed to such a point that it was a cheap source of energy. Electric lighting and electric gadgets of many kinds were available.

The depression of the thirties gave people in the community time to think and the compulsion to find new ways to survive in a competitive world. This had its reflection in realignment of cooperative planning through citizen participation in the schools. The mounting complexity and worship of mere bigness of the twenties had run its course under Board of Education, architect, and the superintendent in that order. Their monuments were a burden on the foundations both physical and financial. How could such inhuman travesties on places dedicated to the improvement of living be mitigated?

Building had not quite stopped, but had slowed down to a point where plenty of time and plenty of motive were available to try to extract the ultimate effectiveness out of every brick. A few gifted superintendents led the quest for better planned buildings back to teachers, custodians, technical consultants and in more instances to parents themselves. They knew what they needed, and sometimes they knew the jobs that were not being done for lack of proper planning. They were added to the former team, and synthesized a high standard of service for better buildings.

1930 to Present

Also, the depression of the '30's gave pocketbooks, both personal and civic, a pretty grim drubbing. But in its stagnant years, when most new construction consisted of government projects which put thousands of men to work, idleness gave a few architects time for meditation, a re-thinking of the whole problem of school building design along functional lines.

Adults in the community have always used schools more or less. Interested parents have met with teachers for generations. It remained for the idleness of the thirties, the group efforts of the war years, and the leisure of the postwar short work week to make the neighborhood and community school center come alive. A group of G.I.'s who petitioned to use the gym for basketball, a group of young married people who petitioned to use the cafeteria for a dance, a group of white collar workers who petitioned to use the shop for hobbies--these were the realities behind the phrase "community users of school facilities." The reality of "community planning" is the channeling of these pressures and these petitions into an investment of thought in the building itself and into community support for its erection.

If this trend continues (and it should), the school plant of tomorrow truly will be the result of cooperative planning and effort by the board of education, architect and engineer, professional school staff and people of the community.

What needs does a community have which a school might help meet? What kinds of programs and services are called for? What plant facilities should be provided? The answers to these questions require much information, and the help of many different people. The alert community today seeks its solution to its school building problem by finding answers to the above questions. No one or two persons have all the answers. Rather the combined effort of the people of the community aided by the most expert educators, architects, and other technicians must be marshalled if an adequate solution is found.

Much remains to be done. Some communities have not yet seen the light. Others are proceeding falteringly. But progress is being made. What of the future? Who knows? Who can predict with any certainty? Judged by past developments, changes in school plant design will be greater in number

and more radical in character from what exists today than most of us have the vision to foresee or the courage to foretell. We think a few changes are self-evident. Sites on which school buildings are built will vary in size. We will think in terms of ten acres rather than one to five acres. More and more the general recreational and community needs will be coordinated at the public school, the one property in every community which belongs to all the people.

More space will be provided for each activity. Rooms will be wider not only because more nearly square spaces give greater utility, but also because spaces with wider spans cost less to construct. The principle of modular coordination will govern the manufacture of all building materials, making all parts interchangeable and greatly reducing the labor cost of construction.

Most new buildings are already providing for a greater degree of flexibility. It is possible to change interiors almost at will and with the expenditure of a minimum of time and labor. Space is designed so that it can be efficiently used for various activities. Equipment is interchangeable. Little of it is fastened to the building. Storage space is expanded and more attention is devoted to its design.

In conclusion, there has been accelerated progress in the construction of school buildings in the United States during the past two decades. Along with the evolution of the modern school building, there has been accumulated a large body of literature on school buildings: types, standards, materials and construction, economy of space, school building equipment, building programs, and the like. Educators, architects and the community have made their contribution to the general improvements of school buildings in the cities and counties in school districts across this state and nation.

OPENNESS AND INFORMATION AS A BASE FOR
UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

by
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Educators are increasingly concerned over decreasing community support of their efforts. Evidence is conclusive of a growing gap of confidence in our public institutions, schools among them. And why not! Increasingly, schools are dominated and preoccupied by bureaucratic rules and regulations from federal and state levels. Increasingly, parents see Boards of Education and administrators so involved with diverse pressures that they don't know or don't have time for the concerns of the community. Increasingly, teacher organizations are focusing on objectives that have nothing to do with improved learning opportunities and often conflict with the learner's interest. Issues are abundant . . . achievement scores spiraling down, grades spiraling up, criterion referenced testing, increasing violence and discipline, mainstreaming, individualization, open space, and open learning. Is it any wonder that citizens are confused and frustrated? Is it any wonder that they feel the schools are out of control and it doesn't matter what their concerns are?

It is significant that social and political pressure based upon parents' right to know has resulted in the following developments in the past couple of years:

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1. Federal legislation completely opening up students' records to parents and students with limits placed upon school usage of information.
2. Handicapped legislation and court action mandating parent involvement in assessment, evaluation, and program placement of handicapped learners buttressed by hearing rights.
3. Court action dictating due process rights of students in disciplinary matters.
4. Student strikes, violence, and controversy over the material in textbooks and who is to decide what should be taught.
5. All kinds of accountability legislation setting forth clear and definitive expectations for the schools to address.

The time has come when all those involved in education should realize that parents and citizens are going to demand to know what is going on in the schools, and rightfully so. Education represents a major public investment (over 50% of governmental expenditures in Tennessee), an investment whose price is rising rapidly. More importantly, the American educational system has always been founded upon local lay control of the schools. Despite growing bureaucracies, legislative and court directions, and increasing grabs for power by centralized pressure groups and federal and state levels of government, local control and support of education is and should be the great promise of the American system.

Public Involvement in the Schools

Critics and leaders are busy proposing that schools should provide increased opportunity and methods whereby the public is "involved" in educational decision-making at all appropriate levels. Most administrators are busy making efforts to do so. Administrators are also busy trying to involve teachers in all kinds of management decisions from calendars to curriculum. Our best thinkers insist that students must be integrally involved in disciplinary standards, program development, and evaluation of personnel. While few argue about the merits of "involvement," those who are on the firing line work within severe limitations in involving others.

Some concerns are far too complex (Title I evaluative design), some concerns are too touchy (personnel evaluation, transfers, etc.), and some are too cumbersome (Title IX implementation) for extensive involvement of teachers, much less parents, and students. Administrative leaders are held accountable for this variety of complex, controversial, and cumbersome decisions. Leaders should continue to try to involve others when and where possible but all should understand there are severe limitations to the feasibility of parental involvement.

Administrators who have tried and failed with Title I or Vocational Advisory Committees, budget advisory groups, individual parent involvement in assessment of handicapping conditions, and P. T. A. promotion understand that "involvement" is easy to talk about but hard to achieve. Looking at the complexity of modern life and social forces of our Future Shock world, it could be that our efforts to promote citizen involvement are self defeating and naive.

Openness and Leveling as a Basis for
Improved School-Community Relations

The thesis of this paper is that school personnel must vastly increase the volume and the candor of information provided to parents, students, and others. Educators don't have anything to hide and we should not act like we want to. Lay citizens in the modern world don't have the time or the commitment to get involved in all the decisions school people make. They do need and are demanding to know what is being accomplished and how. A good faith relationship between educators and the public must be based upon comprehensive, realistic, and candid information. Support can only be expected when citizens understand our progress and our problems and feel like we are being honest in our approaches. If citizens have the information they need, they can then let educators know when and how much they want to be involved.

Boards of Education and administrators must provide a variety of information to parents. To do this we must do away with the philosophy of "if that gets out some will grab hold of it and run with it." There are those with special interests, bones to pick, or extraneous motives who may do so, but confidence from the majority of our citizens requires they have that chance. Examples of information that might be communicated are:

1. average school and grade level achievement, I. Q., aptitude scores,
2. disciplinary actions, reasons for action, discipline problems of the schools in general,
3. pupil-teacher ratios throughout the system,
4. salaries of all personnel,
5. strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum,
6. strengths and weaknesses of instructional strategies,
7. how resources are allocated and to what.

Boards and administrative staffs should open up their meetings and their minds to the concerns of the community. When concerns are expressed by

parents, they should be followed up with research, explanations, discussions, etc.

The principal and staff at the local building level must also strive to inform parents about what is going on. Such actions as clinics, meetings, and newsletters on such items as testing, grading, team planning, individualization, open space utilization, would be examples. Local staffs should level with parents about discipline in the lunchroom or the restrooms. Parents should be told about behavioral expectations and homework expectations. Grade level groups of teachers should let parents know how they are dividing the children up and why. Most of the local building concerns are based upon misinterpretation or miscommunication and the staff of the building level must improve and increase information distribution. Every parent should be fully informed as their child is or is not making progress.

Each teacher should operate with the express purpose of informing parents of his or her concerns, progress, and programs. Papers should be sent home and notes or calls made to parents when problems arise. Each teacher should strive to let students and parents know of his or her standards, expectations, and procedures relative to discipline, homework, grading, grouping, materials, etc. The individual teacher probably is in the best position to communicate with or involve parents. Parents are certainly more inclined to come to a meeting with their child's teacher than a general meeting for large groups of parents at the building or system level. Every parent should be fully informed as to the progress his or her child is or is not making and what the teacher's plans for that child are.

Conclusion

It is important for schools to regain the confidence of the public. If we are doing our best with what we have, isn't it time we let parents know just where we are? We really don't have the time or the staff to involve everybody; we do have the time to inform. Each educator has this responsibility and each must make his or her best effort. This effort will be rewarded with a good faith relationship with the public leading to increased support and understanding.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: AN INTEGRAL PART
OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DAY

by
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and
Gaylord Lambdin
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To an elementary school principal, school-community relations means much more than simply reviewing the basic textbook principles of public relations when the school is in trouble. It is also much more than plugging the leaks in the relationship between the school and the community. In fact, public relations is a very integral part of the day-to-day operation of the school and, to be effective, it must continue around the clock.

To have an effective relationship between the school and community, the elementary school principal must first realize that good and wholesome communications between the community and the staff must be maintained. If the principal is convinced that public relations is an integral part of administration, then he will use all available resources to see that this phase of the total program is implemented.

What resources are available to the elementary school principal?

1. The leadership qualities of the principal are very important in planning and carrying out public relations programs within the school. He must realize his strong points as well as his weaknesses and prejudices in order to

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provide leadership. The elementary school principal must have the trust and help from the staff and community if effective relationships are to be achieved.

2. The elementary school principal must use the entire staff in the most effective manner. The elementary teacher will perhaps play the most important role in developing and maintaining efficient public relations programs; therefore, it is imperative that the principal have some input in the selection of school personnel. The principal should know the particular and peculiar characteristics of all the staff so that strengths and weaknesses can be determined.

3. The elementary school principal has the various community groups as well as individuals at his disposal in improving the school and in defending it against unjustified attacks. He must continuously involve his community in the school's programs. When participation is genuine and significant, the probability of greater understanding is greatly increased.

4. The elementary school principal has the student body at his disposal through overall school activities to project the school to the community. The influence that students have on community support is too often underestimated, even at the elementary school level.

The elementary school principal is the key to good school-community relations. He must be interested in the affairs of the community and have the confidence of the community and actually be a part of the community. The principal must know and respect the power structure as well as other community groups and be willing and ready to exert leadership in helping all groups to define achievable goals and to reward any progress made toward this achievement.

Perhaps the greatest and most important task of the elementary principal is that of making his faculty and staff aware of the need for positive public relations at all times. Too many teachers are facing crowded classrooms, insufficient preparation time, and busy schedules and many do not believe they have the time to devote to such "extracurricular" activities as public relations. The principal must find a way to make the teachers aware of the fact that building and maintaining goodwill is a significant part of the educational program and not something that can be turned on and off casually or capriciously.

The elementary principal can have small group meetings with faculty members and involve them in the total school program from the planning stage to the final evaluation. Elementary teachers will be more interested in the public relations aspect of education if they are encouraged to participate and to see the need for improved relationships. The elementary school principal must see that those needs are met.

Many elementary school principals are hesitant to involve the community or groups within the community in the day-to-day affairs of the school, thinking

that the groups will become too involved in the operation of the schools and finally will actually be running the schools.

This apprehension is totally unfounded and perhaps does, in a sense, reflect the inadequacies of the administrative staff or the philosophy of the staff regarding community participation.

A living example of just how much a community will back a school in its many endeavors can best be illustrated by listing the many ways in which the community has helped the Porter School.

1. The P.T.A. supplies teacher aides for Grades K-6 at no cost to the school.
2. Clinic workers voluntarily staff the First Aid Room; they take the required Red Cross First Aid course.
3. P.T.A. furnishes money for playground equipment, as well as \$1,800 per year for high school baseball.
4. The P.T.A. supplied personnel in planning for the building and furnishing of a new 20-station elementary school to replace one that burned.
5. The P.T.A. furnishes transportation chaperones for all field trips.

In summary, involvement both of the principal and the school staff in the community affairs and the involvement of parents and the community in the total elementary program are essential to the effective operation of any elementary school. The principal with the necessary leadership qualities is the key to the school's involvement in community affairs, and under his leadership parental involvement in the school program will evolve. The fear of parental "takeover" (in our case) is totally unfounded. The one factor that has been discovered is that by involving parents as aides, clinic workers, and chaperones, parents are much more aware of just what happens during the school day and how teachers and staff face the many problems that occur. The one quote most often heard is, "I never realized that the job of a teacher or principal was so demanding!"

People constitute one of every community's richest resources for teaching and learning. Almost every person is a specialist in some area. Human resources come in both sexes, and in all ages, races, levels of education, and social backgrounds. Any person with a special talent or specialized knowledge who is able and willing to serve may be called upon.

Catharine M. Williams
The Community as Textbook
1975

TEACHER + PARENT = HAPPY STUDENT

by

Sherry L. Cannon, Kindergarten Teacher
Collierville Elementary, Shelby County School System

As teachers in today's society, we are actively involved in one of the most outstanding demands in public education--the demand for parent/community involvement. The teacher, more than any other professional, has countless opportunities to gain, maintain, and strengthen parent/community involvement. Our first step is to recognize and accept our responsibility to the parents and community. Secondly, we should examine present efforts that are being made to actively involve the parent and community in the curriculum. With this background, we can then challenge ourselves to implement these activities more effectively and to create more opportunities for parent/community involvement.

As a new teacher, I was vaguely aware of this area of responsibility. When someone spoke of actively involving the parents and community, I instantly associated it with progress reports, newsletters, field trips, and volunteer help in the classroom. I honestly did not understand why parent/community involvement was so important until someone awakened me to the fact that we are employed by the public to educate their children. They are why we are here. Therefore, it appears logical to assume that when the public asks to be informed and to have a voice, it then is our responsibility as members of the profession to offer each member of the public this opportunity. It also appears logical to assume that the voice of the public should be heard as well as being an integral part in the decision-making process.

For the most part, teachers have been encouraging parent/community involvement for years. We have been urged to include written statements in conjunction with progress reports, send progress reports home more frequently,

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and to plan parent/teacher conferences. Teachers have been encouraged to invite parents to visit the classroom to observe activities or assist in the activities. We have also been encouraged to ask resource people from the community to visit the classroom to contribute to units of study or special interest topics. Activities such as open house nights, parent-teacher association meetings, athletic events, and adult education classes have been arranged to offer opportunities for involvement.

Without question, these are commendable ways of involving the parents and community. Why then are our publics not satisfied? It may very well be a combination of several things. First, it is possible that we are not making a unified effort to implement ideas such as the ones listed above. Some teachers may be constantly seeking ways to involve the parents and community while others may be "putting it off." If the latter is the case, then it is up to that individual teacher to realize his/her responsibility and to begin implementing these ideas.

Second, it is possible that the parents and community are wanting to be more actively involved in the actual curriculum. This does not mean they are demanding to tell us what or how to teach. Instead, they are just asking to be informed and to be a part of what is going on during the school day. Once again, it becomes our responsibility as members of the profession to offer this opportunity to each parent and member of the community.

But how? I am sure this is a big question on your mind right now. As a teacher, I can understand your question or possible reservation. But, as someone who has been involved in a program designed specifically to involve the parent in the child's curriculum, I can also assure you that there is a way to meet this demand.

With this in mind, I would like to share what we have implemented into our kindergarten program at Collierville Elementary School. It is called VIP-Very Important Parent. We chose this name because of our strong belief that the parent is the child's most important teacher. Up until the time he enrolls in school, the parent has usually been his one and only teacher. When a child enters school, we feel that the parent's role as teacher should not end. Instead, the child's environment should just expand to include another teacher who teams up with the parent. We also think that by working together the parent and teacher can significantly affect the child's progress.

In the beginning there were many questions and reservations. Our main questions were: When could we meet with the parents? How could we most effectively work with the parents? and, When could we get supplies and/or money? Our main reservation was: Will the parents want to participate?

Prior to the school year, we met to seek answers to those questions. We decided to try monthly night meetings with the parents. During these

meetings, we visualized parents participating in activities and making games to reinforce the skills that had been taught at school. Next, we laid out a tentative schedule of skills to be developed each month. We then discussed our ideas with our principal, our supervisor, and the assistant superintendent of instruction. The word was all go; the money and/or supplies would be worked out.

Our next step was to approach the parents. At the beginning of the year we met with all of the parents who had children in kindergarten. We explained what we wanted to do and why. We asked each parent whether he/she would participate. Each said "yes!"

At this point, we finalized our overall objectives, our philosophy, and the basic overview of the program. Our next step was to plan our first meeting and to order appropriate supplies. And, so, we did, and with quite a lot of enthusiasm I must say!

Now, seven months later, we are doing the same thing, that is, planning and organizing. Approximately two weeks before each meeting we meet to decide upon the specific activities. Our plans always include a large group activity which varies from discussion groups to making valentines for the children. We also prepare a newsletter that suggests activities which utilize materials in the house. We plan two or three activities for parents to make to take home to use with their children. These activities are related to what we have introduced in the classroom and serve as a reinforcement for a particular skill or combination of skills. By dividing up the responsibilities, our individual work is kept to a minimum. Instructional aides, student helpers, and parent helpers who work in the classroom also assist in preparing and gathering the materials.

One of the most important aspects of our program is evaluation. We have distributed questionnaires to evaluate past meetings and to offer the parent an opportunity to suggest ideas for future meetings. The results of these evaluations have been more than positive. Parents have stated that having more insight into the curriculum, plus the available activities, has enabled them to work more effectively with their children. They have also emphasized that the VIP program has helped to strengthen the ties between the home and school. In turn, we think that the program has affected the overall progress of the children whose parents have participated.

At this point there are several things that we plan to add to the program for next year. First, at the beginning of the school year, we plan to provide parents with a list of skills that coincide with the child's developmental stages. We also hope to individualize the activities more effectively. We have considered setting up centers so that parents can make activities more suited to each individual child's level. I am also certain that there will be other minor changes before next year. I do think, however, that we have taken the first

step in accepting our responsibility to the parent and community to find an effective way to actively involve the parent in the curriculum at Collierville Elementary School.

I realize that it may be impossible for every teacher to participate in a program such as this one. However, there are many alternatives to this type of program. You may consider organizing task cards to send home for the parent to use in working with the child. The task card could include an explanation of the activity and its purpose. It could also include various activities which can be made by using items found in the house. It may also have a teacher-prepared activity to go along with it. The possibilities are endless. The two main keys are organization and cooperation.

In conclusion I would like to pose one hopefully provocative thought. Administrators and professional organizations across the country are fighting to keep public education alive. The real key lies solely in the hand of each individual classroom teacher. By working cooperatively with the parents of our students, we can make this happen!

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"If we are to play our part in the new world order, we need to master every means and every art by which we can communicate with other peoples."

COMMUNICATION AND THE CURRICULUM: A KEY TO
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

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and

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Polls indicate that the public still has faith in its schools. However, this faith and corresponding support is lower than it has been for several decades. Regaining and strengthening public support for schools is a high priority of many districts across the country and will become so for many more.

The instructional program of a school is the heart of the school's functions. Capital outlay and glittering showcases will not long satisfy the community that desires quality educational programs for its citizens. There is a growing interest and need for increasing the public's knowledge about and familiarity with the curricular programs of the schools.

An uninformed community may be either disinterested or extremely aggressive in attacking school policies and programs. It is not realistic to

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expect support from people who are not adequately informed. This holds true even when the school's programs are excellent. It is equally true when support is needed to acquire resources to upgrade programs.

The school should want community reactions and appropriate involvement, and the community should want to know and understand what is being done in schools. It is, after all, more on the basis of what is happening in the school and to the students that the tone of the relationship between school and community is shaped than on any other single factor. A major responsibility of all concerned with improving school-community relations and improving curriculum is to more effectively communicate to all necessary publics in order to share ideas, results, and pertinent information in the most appropriate manner. People generally understand and help support the decisions they have shared in making; the public wants good schools and is willing to work in an appropriate manner to make them better.

The types of concerns that people have and their reasons for wanting to be involved are based on personal, institutional, and societal interests. In dealing with the concerns of the various publics, no one method of categorizing them is satisfactory. Different categories need to be applied as the nature of the communication need changes. The simple categories of parent and non-parent patron may suffice when the communication need is clearcut and an immediate concern of the parent or non-parent patron is all that needs to be considered. In a more complex situation, however, the parent may need to be viewed as being more of a taxpayer than parent, or more of a religious leader than parent. The non-parent patron may need to be viewed as a retiree, a grandparent, a young adult, a governmental leader, a member of profession, or someone with other kinds of special interests.

The complexity of the matrix of interests exhibited by members of a school community could cause the school administrator to abandon the communications process in despair. However, planning a program for communicating with the public is feasible if the leaders of a school system are conscious that for communication purposes, membership in groups or categories is fluid. In view of the fluid nature of group memberships, it thus becomes possible to look at the various publics in a community in a more manageable way.

In relating to the community concerning the school's curriculum, educators should be conscious of both the formal and the informal group structures. The formal groups are generally recognized as those groups that are organized and have a recognized membership. Such groups would include civic, cultural, economic, fraternal, governmental, patriotic, professional, religious, youth, and other special interest groups. Again, the educator would be quick to recognize that a school patron could easily be a member of several of these groups at any given time.

The informal groups are much more difficult to define, but they may be more effective in communicating than some of the formal groups of the community. The informal groups are groups that are, at best, loosely organized to promote common interests. These interests generally evolve around highly personal if not emotionally packed concerns, such as moral issues, political opinions, ethnic orientations, and other similar concerns.

In order to effectively communicate with these various segments of the community, the educator needs to take several steps:

1. Identify the various organized or formal groups of the community and determine the social composition and general interests of these groups.
2. Identify the varied interests that seem to have an informal clustering and determine who the leaders or persons of influence are in the informal groups.
3. Make a determination as to how each group could best be included in the communication process in a manner allowing for open exchange of ideas that would add richness to and support for the school's curriculum.

Remembering that these groups and their concerns are fluid, these steps should be implemented on a periodic if not continuous basis in order to identify changing memberships and concerns.

Bounds of participation appropriate to the needs and expectancies of various publics are important to set and maintain with care. Participation that exceeds the potential for and interest in participating is of no help or fairness to anyone involved. The levels of communication planned must be adequate to provide for conveying facts and information to all who want to know, while also being expansive enough to allow for exchange of ideas between the school and those publics who wish to be involved. In either case, the communication which takes place serves to convey assumptions, values, and a philosophic base that provides fertile soil for the development of new insights and changes.

To develop an effective school-community relations program with the various publics, at least two levels of communication must be considered and included in the process. The first of these levels is INFORMATIONAL. For some persons, the primary need is for information; that is, they want the facts to interpret for themselves. In preparing for dissemination at the informational level, one takes facts or ideas one wants others to know about; selects words, gestures, or means for putting together the content of the message to be received; then conveys the message to the receiver by the most appropriate means possible. This may be as simple as placing information in a mailbox, making a presentation to a group, posting an item on a bulletin board, or transmitting it through some media device. While these means may be adequate for "telling" purposes, this is essentially a one-way communications approach and provides no assurance of reaching a person. It leaves the process of under-

standing and interpreting the message up to the receiver, who obviously will interpret it within the framework of his own interests, attitudes, and group relationships.

Because of these factors, it is essential to insure inclusion of a second level of communication, which may be referred to as the INTERACTIVE level. Some publics have a need, a desire, and the potential for moving beyond the point of communicating on the informational level. They may wish to become involved in a more participatory way that includes opportunity for interaction. These publics may wish to engage in dialog based on information received, and become engaged in the thought processes as well as the content of the message. Interactive level communication strategies provide the various publics with the opportunity to understand, interpret, react, and respond to that information which is conveyed about the school curriculum.

Implementing successful communication strategies is something that takes time and hard work, and it is not easy to accomplish if not taken seriously from the start. Some suggestions for consideration, including both informational and interactive levels of participation, are listed:

1. Invite parents and other interested publics to visit in the schools, taking the time to explain to them what the classes are doing. Permit pupil participation in making these explanations.
2. Bring in lay people as members of curriculum committees to study problems with educators.
3. When you find outside groups existing that are studying or concerned about school problems, invite the group to work with you on a cooperative basis and offer the group your assistance in its own study.
4. Welcome every opportunity to have parents help in connection with school programs, field trips, dramatics, school drives, etc.
5. Use regularly organized school organizations and groups to cooperatively set up plans whereby other publics will be encouraged to participate in school related study in positive ways.
6. Listen to citizens when working with them in any type of organization, in or out of school. Educators are often more likely to talk at the expense of listening.
7. Make it a point to become better acquainted with people in the community, thus making both educators and patrons more comfortable when these patrons become actively involved in school programs.

8. Make every attempt to find out what the community is thinking about the schools through face-to-face contacts and open discussions on issues, problems, concerns, and interests.

9. Provide more opportunity for evaluative input from the various publics relative to perceptions of the schools, and use this input in a positive rather than reactive or defensive manner.

10. Identify community resources, both people and things, and build them into the curricular experiences. This offers rewarding and enriching opportunities that are often impossible without the help of the community.

11. Communicate regularly, at least on an informational level, with your particular publics, whether they ask for it or not.

12. Encourage educators in the school to do things that will broaden their own perspectives relative to community activities. The publics are not the only ones who need information and involvement opportunities; educators cannot afford to be so narrow as to only speak "educationese," or communication with the community will be severely limited.

13. Accept opinions of the community members and various publics as valid and worthwhile, and make use of them in planning for improvement of the school program.

14. Build in student participation through community contacts relative to special projects and various areas of study included in school programs. Students are one of the best means for effectively communicating to any public.

It is through means such as these that members of the community are able to develop feelings of greater inclusion and ownership, which in turn establishes the foundation for meaningful relationships of trust and commitment between school and community. It is at this level of communication that the publics begin to identify with the schools as being "their" schools.

The purpose of communication at both the informational and interactive levels is not to try and "sell" the public on what the school is about, but rather to provide for open exchanges that will result in mutual understanding and common purposes, and in improved relations between the school and community on a continuing basis. When programs for school-community relations are comprehensively planned to include participation opportunities at both the informational and interactive levels, the school will find its time spent differently in relating to the various publics. There will be less need for reactive relating which often requires schools to be prepared to produce answers upon demand, usually under some pressure of time and circumstance. In turn, there will be more opportunity for the school to engage in proactive relating, in which there is the opportunity to determine needs and work toward

resolution of problems with members of the community being meaningfully, appropriately, and productively involved.

All persons involved with the problems of curriculum improvement and building positive school-community relations must concern themselves with the problems of more effective communication. Ideas communicated, by whomever they are communicated, need to be soundly based ideas and put forth in a manner that is positive in terms of forcefulness and effectiveness. Such communications need to come with openness and honesty, for if they are not sincerely advocated, the effect on others will be negative rather than enhancing. Feelings openly and honestly conveyed can have a contagious quality to them that tends to positively influence others in a way to gain support and promote understanding.

Caring enough to communicate about what you are doing requires patience and persistence. It is likely that invitations to become informed or involved may be greeted by some with skepticism and suspicion of motives, or that some may see it as just a chance to complain. In the long run, however, recognizing that the public of the school is diverse in its needs, interests, and concerns, and if there is a willingness of the educator to allow for time necessary to involve and inform community members on various levels, the dividends gained will be great. Teaching and learning both can be appreciably improved through more effective ways of relating. It is only through an effective and well planned program, allowing for multiple levels of communication with the various publics in the community, that mutually beneficial and meaningful school-community relationships can be obtained which will be of benefit to the school and its continuous efforts toward curriculum improvement.

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When the educational enterprise is operating smoothly, the public (community) does not often exercise its right to an accounting. It is when the public finds itself inadequately served that the issue comes to the fore. This is the public process of accountability. Often the right of the educational consumer to an account for professional performance, while acceptable in theory, is, in effect, nullified by challenges to what are considered basically 'professional affairs.' Public education is a public as well as a professional business. The current educational climate is one of reform. It is a natural consequence that the public would seek its rightful role in such an important process.

Mario D. Fantini
The People and Their Schools:
Community Participation
1975

COMMUNITY SUPPORT: BACKBONE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

by
Kenneth E. Dodson
Superintendent
Overton County Schools

Building effective community relationships is an important part of any program of public education. This is especially true in rural areas, such as in Overton County, where people believe strongly in "their" schools and want their children to benefit from an educational system which is people-oriented. These relationships do not provide solutions to all problems and conflicts, but they surely prevent some and help to solve others.

The building process for gaining and preserving community goodwill and support begins right with the central office staff. In a small school system which has no director of public relations, which is the case in Overton County, the superintendent must take the lead role. He must believe that public relations is a major administrative function having high priority in the total operation of the system. He must lead with confidence and enthusiasm because these traits help to inspire others on the staff to be sensitive to the concerns of the system and to the problems of individuals. He must lead with honesty, or at least he must try his best to do that which he believes is in the total best interests of the children he serves.

But the attitude of the central office staff is only the beginning. More is required. The staff must be knowledgeable, and staff members cannot have knowledge unless means are developed to insure that they are informed. Regular staff meetings provide the first line of communication. Not only can information be shared at these meetings, but staff members can also share in some of the decisions which are made daily. Responsibility and authority can be shared as expectations for staff performance are defined. The outcome of this is that

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the staff will develop the same confidence and enthusiasm as held by the superintendent; and, hopefully, as their talents are nourished, each member of the staff will develop skills and understandings which are even greater than that of the superintendent.

If public support for education is to continue, teachers must be well informed on all aspects of the educational system. Teachers are out there on the front lines in their individual communities serving the people who will eventually voice their approval or disapproval on what is happening in public education. Teachers should be informed through principal's meetings, county-wide association meetings, and printed materials which are passed along to each individual teacher. Many of these meetings are held during the regular school day so as to help insure teacher participation and dedication to educational issues. Teachers must have adequate and correct information if they are to relate appropriately to other publics.

Students serve as a primary source in the information program. They comprise the largest community group which has daily personal contact with the school. If the information program fails with students, it likely will fail throughout the entire community. Each student makes judgments about his or her school--about the teachers, the courses which are taught, the way the building is maintained, and about literally thousands of other elements which we call "schooling." These judgments are carried from the school on a daily basis, and they go into the homes and businesses of almost everybody in the community. We need to keep this important public in mind as we design and issue report cards, prepare pamphlets and other materials, and as we generally attempt to communicate with the student through other verbal means.

Paraprofessionals provide another communications avenue which, if properly used, can bolster community support for education. They too must be given accurate information about what is going on in each program; and, remember, they are eyewitnesses in the educational process and their testimony to outside publics is valuable to total community understanding. They must be treated fairly and with respect; they must know they are members of the team and that their contributions are significant to the work of the school.

The monthly newsletter is one of the more important activities of the public relations team in Overton County. The newsletter is written by the central office staff. It contains information from each department as well as a personal message from the superintendent concerning important educational issues. The newsletter is attached to the payroll check of each employee; it is not likely to be overlooked. Copies of the newsletter are also sent to the local radio station, both local newspapers, county court members, school board members, the Overton County Judge, State Department personnel, and the forty-seven parents who make up the nine Compensatory Advisory Councils.

The members of the Overton County Board of Education believe in and practice good public relations. Each meeting of the board is well advertised and publicized by the local news media. One local newspaper editor attends each meeting and makes a thorough report in his editorial column. Press releases from the central staff are appropriately timed and geared to board actions. The board strongly believes and fully practices the axiom of one of our founding fathers, "Give the people the facts and they will make the right decisions." The board also plans and administers a visitation program to each of the eleven schools at least twice per year. Each member realizes the complexity of the educational process and believes he can serve better by making on-site personal contact with school personnel.

An extremely important public is that group routinely and traditionally known as the County Court. It is this group which appropriates the local funds which enable the educational system to go forward; thus, it is this group which has a special need for accurate and complete information. The relationship between the County Court and the Board of Education is one which must be nourished to the good end that both groups work harmoniously. Occasional meetings should be held between representatives of each group so that appropriate avenues for the exchange of information can be maintained. The central idea for these meetings must aim at the proper exchange of information and not merely at the perennial need for more money. In fact, the most appropriate sharing of vital information may occur when money is not the primary educational issue.

The superintendent and central office staff appear from time to time on local radio programs for the purpose of discussing current programs and related topics. During these broadcasts, citizens of the county may ask questions via telephone concerning the topic of discussion. These programs are well planned in advance and they provide an excellent opportunity for improved communication between the professionals who operate the schools and the lay public who pay the bills for that operation. Individual school personnel who appear on these programs are invited out of a need for their expertise and not just to fulfill a program commitment.

The faculty and students of each school unit expect to see and to hear the superintendent during the school year. They expect him to visit the schools regularly. They expect to see him in the classroom occasionally, or on the playground, or in the gymnasium, or in a school assembly program. He is expected to be the leader of the educational system and not a stranger to it.

The activities which count toward the development and maintenance of goodwill for the schools is endless in any school system. While it may often seem that some efforts are a waste of time, the awareness that relationships can be improved must be ever present. Those involved in public education must believe that what they are doing deserves the support of the people. They must believe that the future of the nation lies with the future of the child, and

that public education offers the best means for guaranteeing the democratic faith that people can live better. Through a well planned and effective public relations program, educators can gain that community support which may rightly be called the backbone of public education.

* * *

"I believe in telling your story to the people. If you go direct to the people and get them to agree with you . . . everybody else must give way in your favor."

EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS

by

Dr. Mildred E. Doyle
Superintendent, Knox County Schools

The year of 1976 is an event of signal importance to most Americans; it is the 200th anniversary of our independence. Our Bicentennial accords special recognition to the Birthday of our nation and it serves as an appropriate time to celebrate past achievements and prepare for the challenges of the future. The daring and bold experiment known as public education, which in the words of Horace Mann "had no precedent in world history," epitomizes and characterizes both our history and our national character.

The first and greatest task assigned to the public school by our founding fathers was to provide an enlightened citizenry in order that self-government would work. And self-government has now worked on these shores for 200 years. Through education we have taught self-government, developed a common language, achieved national unity, and created a way of life and thought and human equality.

Yet public education faces many challenges. The horizon appears both bright and clouded; great successes and agonizing failures stand in front of us. It is vital to the survival of our nation that we leaders in education look ahead and assume our responsibility for shaping the future. I am going to mention four challenges which I see on the horizon. I invite your consideration of these

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concerns and ask that as you look at the horizon in your school system or in your job that you set some priorities and meet the challenges head on.

First, I see providing quality educational leadership at the school level as a major concern. We rely most heavily upon the local school principal to see that the goals of the organization are carried out. In so doing, we have sometimes placed unreasonable burdens on his shoulders. A recent Ford Foundation study has emphasized that the principal becomes so engrossed in management and bureaucracy that he cannot function as a change agent and an instructional leader. If schools are to be responsive to the changing needs of growing communities, we must find creative solutions to this problem. History records leadership as a basic aspect of the communication structure of any social order. Thus, the extent which the local school principal can provide leadership will determine the extent which he can function effectively to improve communication between the school and the community.

Second, there is a need for a rebirth of idealism and of respect for ethics and morality. Our country became great because families, churches, and schools emphasized certain common elements. I believe that those same elements are necessary today. We must seek ways to bring about more agreement on the values that will guide our daily lives. Honesty, cleanliness, kindness, trust, respect for the rights of others, and the dignity of man are basic ingredients for a full and happy life. The school must assume its responsibility for bringing about a rebirth and a rededication to these values; and it cannot postpone this responsibility without serious harm to our way of life. This is a serious challenge not only for the school but also for all of our society. As was said by Oliver Wendell Holmes, "To educate a child we must begin with his grandfather."

I am not suggesting that we impose certain traditional standards. Agreement regarding values will be found not by submission but by honest discussion of our beliefs. We must learn to discuss issues, to meet our oponents face to face, to examine competing ideas, and to restudy our own beliefs. Out of such discussion a gradual body of common opinion will emerge. I am urging that we undertake the necessary dialogue which will result in more common opinions and agreement which will give guidance and direction to our lives and our relationships.

Third, we must rewin the confidence and support of the general public for education. Generally speaking, I am afraid that as professional educators we have failed to communicate (to achieve understanding) with parents and the public at large. We have neglected efforts to include them sufficiently in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs. We have been unable to communicate both our successes and failures in direct and simple ways. As a result, there is some disaffection with public education. Only our determined and intelligent efforts will overcome this lack of understanding. I believe that, generally, people are favorably disposed toward what they conceive to be

adequate education; and they will give their support to our programs when they understand them to be beneficial to the general welfare.

Furthermore, the schools have undertaken to be all things to all people. We have kept on adding, but we have cast very little aside. The schools have been called upon, sometimes mandated, to arrest drug abuse, reduce highway fatalities, teach sex education, train good drivers, entertain the public, reduce racial injustices, conduct charitable drives, and attempt many other tasks beyond its assignment to increase knowledge and improve skills.

One of our challenges, then, is to reassess the national charge to the public school system and to set realistic expectations for the education of children and youth. Of the challenges on the horizon the most important of all is our responsibility to the children and youth in the public schools. Students, teachers, parents, patrons--all are alike but they are also all different. I wish I could give you a simple recipe for promoting the likenesses we need, while at the same time retaining the unique differences which must be preserved. I would remind you of an old truism, namely, that we do not teach classes of students; we teach individual students who happen to come to us in groups, or in classes. This is a simple truth, but it is basic. In the process of education it is not necessary that people all be alike. Each person should be helped to develop the necessary skills of life but all persons should also be encouraged to cultivate their diverse talents to whatever special type of excellence they aspire.

In whatever we do to achieve agreement within a framework of diversity, we must not fall victim to power struggles within and without our system of public education. We must maintain cooperative working relationships with citizens who support schools; that is an essential element of public understanding. We must also create situations which encourage participation in school affairs to the end that public thought and public energy will promote the general well-being. But in all of this, our aims must always contribute to a reawakening of our dedication to young people and must serve to focus our attention on the individual's needs, potential, and future.

It (education) promises to solve the problem which is otherwise so nearly insoluble--how to educate rapidly and sufficiently the ever-expanding masses who are losing contact with the traditions of Western society. The explosive increase of the population in the past hundred and fifty years, its recent enfranchisement during the past fifty years, the dissolution, or at least the radical weakening, of the bonds of the family, the churches, and of the local community have combined to make the demand upon the schools almost impossibly big.

Walter Lippmann
The Public Philosophy
1955

THE CHANGING MOOD OF TENNESSEE'S TEACHERS

by

Keith Ericson, Director of Public Relations
Tennessee Education Association

Image is nothing more than a reflection of what a person appears to be at any given time. This definition holds true not only for individuals but also for groups of people. When a group of people "enjoys" a certain image, then each individual in that group is affected by that "group image."

Generally speaking, the word "doctor" elicits a certain mental picture in anyone's mind. The same is true for terms like lawyer, dentist, judge, engineer, pilot, pharmacist, and teacher. However, of all words or titles mentioned above teacher probably has been the object of ridicule or unpleasant descriptive terms more than any of the others. People who teach are referred to as "just teachers." A common statement, full of ridicule, is "those who can do, those who can't teach."

Teachers are also generally viewed, by many who are making decisions about teachers, as employees who are supplementing the family income. In other words, teaching is a good job for a woman whose husband brings home the real pay check. There are still probably quite a few teachers who fit this description and who accept it as necessary but many more "non-bread winners" are beginning to resent the implication that anyone who wants to earn a middle class income had better prepare to do more than "just be a teacher."

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This resentment is based on one reality which has surfaced just within the past few years in Tennessee--the reality that teachers many years ago created the image that is a reflection of what teachers are today. And since the creation of the image, many teachers have adopted the attitude that they must live with the image their predecessors created.

But teacher unrest nationwide for the past eight to ten years should have been a warning signal to all who are concerned about public education. This unrest is now very much a reality in Tennessee. Teachers know now that if they change their image, they must actually change what they are. And this change of attitude about what teachers "should" or "should not" do has become the jumping off place for action which certainly would have been considered "unprofessional" just a few years ago. Teachers are finally recognizing the fact that they can do a professional job in the classroom, and then work outside of the classroom to change the image of the teaching profession. They also realize that becoming involved in negotiations or political activity does not make them "unprofessional" simply because someone opposed to such activity labels that activity as "unprofessional."

During the final four years of this decade we can expect teachers to request, very forcefully, the right to negotiate with boards of education in such matters that directly affect salaries, working conditions, and curriculum. Teachers will be telling boards of education that they can no longer justify--to the taxpayer and teacher--paying inflated prices for industry's products and services and at the same time tell "those teachers" that there just "isn't enough money to pay higher salaries." Teachers will be telling boards of education that they should no longer make decisions unilaterally about curriculum and working conditions. Teachers will be saying, "We are in the classrooms; we are the professionals; our opinions are necessary."

And teachers will be saying to political candidates for local, state, and national offices not to make promises they do not intend to fulfill.

Finally, many teachers feel that education has been a stepchild for too long. Teachers hear too many questions from concerned parents who want to know why certain things have to be the way they are. Teachers know that many of the frustrations of parents are also the frustrations of teachers. But a changing mood is now a force to be dealt with--a mood that reflects dissatisfaction with image, with status, and with lip service that is all too often not translated into reality.

All other professional groups enjoy professional recognition because they became involved in the major decisions being made about their profession. One way or another teachers will become involved in Tennessee. In the process though, a few dust storms will be created, a few feathers will be ruffled, and a few "power structures" will be challenged.

But teachers want professional status not just inside the classroom; they want to live total professional lives. When power structures have changed, when feathers are unruffled or plucked, and when the dust finally settles, we will see a changed image. It may even be an image which will cause doctors, lawyers, engineers, pilots, judges, dentists, and pharmacists to encourage their sons and daughters to become teachers. This will be good for the teaching profession, and also good for the State of Tennessee.

What passes for education today, even in our "best" schools and colleges, is a hopeless anachronism. Parents look to education to fit their children for life in the future. Teachers warn that lack of an education will cripple a child's chances in the world of tomorrow. Government ministries, churches, the mass media--all exhort young people to stay in school, insisting that now, as never before, one's future is almost wholly dependent upon education.

Yet for all this rhetoric about the future, our schools face backward toward a dying system, rather than forward to the emerging new society. Their vast energies are applied to cranking out Industrial Men--people tooled for survival in a system that will be dead before they are.

To help avert future shock, we must create a super-industrial education system. And to do this, we must search for our objectives and methods in the future, rather than the past.

Alvin Toffler

A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

by

Dr. Ralph E. Evans, Superintendent
Kingsport City Schools

"Rightly or wrongly, more and more people are questioning what is going on in the public schools today than ever before." That statement was made recently by a chief state school official.

"The legislature is down on education--maybe because of the great cost. If it is for other reasons than cost, then we need to identify these problems and work on them"--a statement made recently by an educator with many years of experience in working with legislatures.

These statements can be retold and magnified many times to describe the dilemma that school boards, administrators and teachers find themselves in today. No longer can our public be expected to support without question our stated financial needs or even our school rules and regulations, courses of study, curriculum content, teaching methods, or methods of dealing with student behavior.

To ignore public relations is to court disaster. Starting now, we must work as never before to regain the public support we once had. Every school administrator in the future must have or develop skills in dealing effectively with public relations.

Perhaps the single most important way to achieve good public relations is through the news media. Working with the news media is an art that can be developed. Once the administrator has developed this skill, good news stories

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can be provided that are mutually beneficial to the newspaper and the school system.

An editor of a medium size daily newspaper stated that school news was his best news. He said it did not matter whether it was good news or bad news. He meant that a story such as the local high school principal is charged with embezzlement is more spectacular than a similar charge against a department store manager. He meant that a racial riot at the local high school sells more papers than a battle between two countries in the Middle East. The average reporter needs no one to work up these kinds of stories. He'll do them himself. Don't expect him to be as eager to work on a story in which non-readers learn to read by a new method. Do expect to work on this kind of story yourself. If you work at it, this is the kind of news that can be good news for the newspaper and the school.

A good method to begin with is to choose one or two good reporters and cultivate them. You will in turn be cultivated by them. To "cultivate" is frequently mistakenly defined as "manipulate." Manipulation never works very long.

Certain public information is not really news, but it is necessary for you to get it published as a service to the school. Included in this category are student registration dates and announcements about called meetings of the PTA. Your "cultivated" reporter will do this for you. Don't expect the news media to be called upon to run these kinds of stories consistently without an equal number of good stories with more reader appeal.

You can be cultivated by the newsman to know what good news is. He will cultivate you to resist the urge to report that you have just attended a national meeting where you heard some national speakers, and it was the most inspiring meeting you have ever attended. This is nothing but chit-chat that is of little or no interest to most of the readers. Either report on something important that occurred at the meeting or forget it.

Don't argue with the newsman in print. You are almost certain to lose. A superintendent of a large school system in California expressed it this way: "If someone (from the newspaper) is building a fire under you, don't help him carry the wood."

"I was misquoted" is usually a cop-out. If the reporter paraphrased what you said, and in substance he reported you rather accurately, you weren't really misquoted. Don't compensate for something you wish you hadn't said by attempting to make the reporter look bad. If you were really misunderstood and the information is wrong, before you do anything about it ask yourself, "Does the thing as stated versus the true situation make any significant difference?" If the answer is "not really," then forget the whole thing. If the information as stated does make a difference, such as "registration will be

held this Thursday," not "next Thursday" as stated in the article, then correct it but refrain from saying whose fault it was. Let him assume it was your fault if he wants to. This will help you the next time.

Be honest, straightforward, and aboveboard in your dealings with the newsman. Let him know you will not volunteer bad news, but you will answer any questions he asks you. You cannot expect him to withhold news that is bad news for the school, if it is in fact news. You gain his respect by talking honestly with him about these kinds of events. Your only way to compensate for it is to work at contributing a story that is positive and will have as much reader appeal as the negative story.

Public support for education in the future cannot be taken for granted. The public must be informed about the many good things that are going on in the schools in America today. The administrator of the future should concentrate on providing the news media with good information on a constant and continuing basis as if the very life of public education depends on it--because it does.

* * *

"Laymen bear the ultimate responsibility for education in our society."

John W. Gardner

It is essential that teachers and school administrators recognize that in an interdependent society, honest effort to obtain public understanding and support are normal and essential aspects of operating any public or private enterprise. Professional maturity requires that we recognize and accept that part of our responsibility.

Gordon McCloskey
Education and Public Understanding
1967

SUPERINTENDENTS' EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS
OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

by
Dr. Shannon D. Faulkner
Superintendent, Tipton County Schools
and
Dr. Harry W. Day
Assistant Superintendent, Tipton County Schools

Many things contribute to the achievement of school leadership, but the key is with the school board and its administrator. The superintendent deals with a variety of groups. All of these groups expose him to conflict in role expectation. The superintendency is a position which is involved in a number of relationship systems. Some of these systems are formally defined, such as, for example, the school system itself and the state department of education. Others are professionally necessary. We refer to these as professional associations. However, there are some relationship systems, neither formally defined nor professionally necessary, which are unavoidable. One such system is the community [1].

The characteristics of the individual superintendent and his attitudes toward his job and board are important. A community's educational program is dependent on the superintendent and the board working together. Attention should be given not only to working together but also to how they may best work together. Archie Dykes stated:

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The board and the superintendent must continuously appraise their working relationships, eliminate the bad, and emphasize the good if they are to perform effectively the task of educational leadership [2].

The Study

In order to deal with this problem area, a study was conducted to consider the following specific problems:

1. What were the professional expectations for school boards as perceived by the superintendents of Tennessee?
2. How did school boards conform to the professional expectations as perceived by the superintendents of Tennessee?

Various methods of research were considered in anticipation of this study. The required data decreed that some type of descriptive research was necessary since the study was to determine the present status of attitudes and characteristics. The questionnaires used in research in role analysis by the School Executive Role Project at Harvard were analyzed and found to be most appropriate for this study. However, the magnitude and scope of the Harvard studies were such that only selected parts of this instrument could be used. These sections of the questionnaire were chosen to be administered to the superintendents of Tennessee which comprised the universe for this study.

The first part of the questionnaire concerned the professional expectations of school board performance as perceived by the superintendents.

The second section of the questionnaire included the same questions as the first, but it required that the superintendents indicate how they felt their board actually performed. This portion was used to measure the boards conformity to the professional expectations established in part one.

Only fifteen items from the original questionnaire were found to have a strong modal pattern, and these were extracted for tabulation in comparing the way superintendents felt boards should act and the way they felt boards did act.

Findings

A complete analysis of the data obtained from the returned questionnaires of 131 public school superintendents of Tennessee was made. The findings are presented in two categories: (1) professional expectations of school boards, and (2) degree of conformity of boards to professional expectations as expressed by the superintendents.

A comparison of the data indicated that superintendents demonstrated the highest degree, ninety percent of professional expectation from boards, in helping "sell" good education to the community and that the lowest degree of conformity, forty-four percent, was recorded for this same item.

Other areas of high expectation were for boards: (1) to have a clear statement of policies under which the school systems should be operated, (2) to take full responsibility for decisions, (3) not to give directions to superintendents' subordinates, and (4) to function as a unit and not as individual members.

The boards' performances were rated relatively high in such things as: (1) paying the necessary expenses of superintendents, (2) appointing only teachers nominated by the superintendent, (3) not giving directions to the superintendent and his subordinates, (4) having open meetings, and (5) respecting the judgment of the superintendent in strictly educational matters.

At least a thirty percent difference between expectations and performance, denoting low conformity, was detected in five of the fifteen items. They were: (7) to help "sell" good education to the community, (8) to have a clear statement of the policies under which the school systems should be operated, (9) to take full responsibility for its own decisions, (10) to have a clear-cut statement of the division of responsibilities between the school board and the superintendent, and (18) for a board to function as a unit, not as individuals.

Only in the area of having open meetings did performance exceed expectations.

Conclusions

There was evidence of a real gap between what the superintendents thought their school boards should do and what they thought was actually done by their boards. There is no doubt that understandings and working relationships between boards and superintendents need to be clarified. There is a special need for a clear-cut division of responsibilities and clear-cut statements of policy. The solution to some of the problems may require legislative action, while others could be alleviated through workshops and inservice training programs.

Potential role conflict is always present when dissatisfactions are uncovered. The resolution or diminution of role conflict between superintendents and their boards should be given special consideration by sociologists, psychologists, and all others who might exert influence on administrative functions.

Universities should examine their training programs for potential administrators, and they should be sure that they contain provisions for informing their students of possible situations which might create conflict.

It is also their responsibility to indicate methods which might minimize the effects of such conflict.

Practicing administrators should re-evaluate their own opinions and attitudes in an effort to improve relationships with their boards and their jobs through self examination.

There is evidence that much research and effort is needed in the areas of educational leadership, human understandings, and public relations.

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ELIZABETHTON SCHOOLS - COMMUNITY SUPPORT

by
Thomas Harville
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Elizabethton City Schools

Introduction

One of the major objectives of school-community support is to keep both the school and community informed of the kinds of activities carried on at school, thus making education a school-community affair. Each is informed of the projects of the other via radio, newspaper, and television.

The program is designed to encourage teachers to reflect changes in teacher roles which have resulted from in-school applications of media to instruction.

School-College Relationship

Recently, a group of teachers requested this office to explore the interest in an off-campus class to be offered in the Elizabethton School System. The purpose of the class was designed to sensitize participants to individual differences among students and to acquire specific ideas and procedures for making allowances for individual differences in the subject matter, presentation, and evaluation. The class was conducted by East Tennessee State University. This was considered to be an excellent in-service for teachers from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The School Board and other school officials were invited to the final class session to hear the participants. The class session

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was video-taped and aired on Channel 8 so that not only Elizabethton but other school systems and communities would benefit.

Field Trips

One way in which the Elizabethton School System uses the "School-Community Concept" is through field trips, one of which is an annual trek to Bays Mountain Nature and Interpretive Center. It includes a 44 acre lake, 25 miles of interpretive trails, three special overlooks, an amphitheater, water ecology pond, Nature Interpretive Center, planetarium and an observation tower. Teacher guides are provided by Bays Mountain authorities for each grade level.

Resource Guide

There are experts and specialists in every school community. Elizabethton Schools annually conduct a parental survey on expertise and the willingness of school patrons to share their knowledge and "know how" with students. They are asked about their occupations, specializations, pictures (either moving or still), interests covered by these pictures, whether they would participate in a program, the nature and content of possible presentations, and the projected times and dates preferred. A brochure of these specialists is prepared in the office of the Media Coordinator and sent to all schools for their convenience and possible use.

State Film Support

The State of Tennessee Department of Education Film Library makes possible twelve films per month to the Elizabethton School System. The Media Coordinator receives, distributes, and returns films to the State each month.

Area Culture and History

Carter County is rich in American Revolutionary heritage. It is the setting of Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River, and it includes the headquarters of the Watauga Purchase and Fort Watauga. It was here that the soldiers enroute to King's Mountain mustered, and Reverend Samuel Doak conducted religious services which appeared to motivate the men to win the decisive battle at King's Mountain. Charles Robertson made the famous Watauga Purchase from the Cherokee Indians at a site in Carter County. It was at Fort Watauga that Lieutenant John Sevier rescued Bonnie Kate Sherrell. The home of Mary Patton, who made powder for the soldiers, is located in Carter County.

We invited two Carter County historians, Judge Ben Allen and Mack Morriss, to discuss Carter County's contribution to the American Revolutionary cause. Their description of activities was video-taped and will be used by civic clubs and schools as a part of the local Bicentennial, 1776-1976. It will be aired on Channel 8 for the benefit of other school systems and communities.

Judge Ben Allen informed this office that an archeologist was employed to find the original site of Fort Watauga. Students soon located Karl Kuttruff, Archeologist, Conservation Department of the State of Tennessee, and a crew of four at work. Locating Fort Watauga was considered to be a contribution to the history of Upper East Tennessee. It was a public desire that this would enhance the spirit of the people in Elizabethton and Carter County and would serve as a teaching possibility in area classrooms.

Joanne Geagley, teacher of Tennessee History at T. A. Dugger Junior High School, became interested in the Fort Watauga Project. She began a unit on Fort Watauga. Karl Kuttruff was invited to come to her class. He presented his findings. His presentation was video-taped and aired on Channel 8.

Shirley Keathley, who at that time was a teacher at Harold McCormick School and is now teaching at T. A. Dugger Junior High School, became interested in the same project. She and her pupils completed a unit on Fort Watauga and took a field trip to the site. She was accompanied by Judge Ben Allen who served as narrator. She and her pupils took pictures and made slides of the area and site of the fort. The descriptions by Judge Ben Allen were video-taped and filed in the film library for future use. It appears that the Elizabethton System has the only visual history of the original Fort Watauga site. In February, 1976, the site was bulldozed and the construction of a building was begun.

Broadside Television Support

The Elizabethton City School System is affiliated with Broadside Television so that schools have full access to programs and technical advice which will bring an acceptable level of television capability to the classrooms. Principals and teachers channel to the Media Coordinator's office and request information to enhance their projects.

W. L. Armstrong, Principal at Harold McCormick School, announced that Shirley Keathley, social studies and English teacher, was interested in making a video-tape and asked for assistance which was provided through the Media Coordinator's office. A tape was prepared for his school to help pupils better understand folk music. Mrs. Keathley and her pupils chose the title, "Houses of Elizabethton." The students visited and interviewed several citizens in the city. A song was written by the students and the teacher to introduce and end the tape. Students prepared and narrated their slides. Parents and school and city officials were invited to see and hear a slide presentation. Broadside

video-taped the slide presentation and the tape was aired on Channel 8. The tape was filed in the film library for future use.

Richard Blaustein, Sociology Professor at East Tennessee State University, made an excellent tape of folk music. The tape was scheduled so that the entire school system could benefit from it. It was also aired on Channel 8.

Louise Mayo, English teacher at Elizabethton High School, developed the idea to compare and contrast mass media reports of Richard Nixon's pardon. The request was given to Broadside Television, whose staff taped ten minutes from CBS, NBC, and ABC News reports. The tape was brought to the classroom for study by her students who criticized and evaluated it. The tape was then filed in the Media Coordinator's film library for future use.

Broadside Television went to the Bristol, Virginia School System and taped their "Right to Read" Program from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The tapes are filed in the film library for school use.

Principal Frank Baker, East Side School, announced that Mary Ann Berry, music teacher, had completed a Bicentennial dialog titled "Let George Do It." Broadside was invited to tape the presentation. It was aired on Channel 8. The tape is in the film library.

WBEJ Radio Support

WBEJ is an Elizabethton radio station. It grants the Elizabethton School System fifteen minutes each week to inform the community of on-going programs and activities in the schools. The entire community is invited as our guest to tell of its projects so that both the schools and community will be informed.

Frank Baker, Principal at East Side School, announced that Jane Montgomery, first grade teacher, was very successful teaching her first graders to read through game playing. Mrs. Montgomery was invited as our guest to explain the unique method of teaching.

Will Andrews, Principal at West Side School, announced that Henry Joy, Title I reading teacher, was conducting an experiment in flexibly scored spelling. Mr. Joy was invited to explain his experiment to the listening audience.

Principal Leslie Webb, Sequoyah School, announced that two of her teachers were interested in team teaching. They were invited to be our guests and to explain their procedure.

WBEJ Radio was nominated for and won a TEA School Bell Award in 1974.

Newspaper Support

Both the Elizabethton Star and the Johnson City Press Chronicle work very closely with the Elizabethton School System. The photographers come to the schools, when requested, to take pictures of on-going activities. News releases are given to the news media periodically to inform the community of the kinds of things the schools do to motivate children.

Media Workshops

Media workshops are held annually to help teachers bridge the wide gulf between the child's interests and the kinds of activities he receives in the classroom. When teachers are informed of the ultra possibilities that media brings to the classroom and apply it, the students complain less of irrelevancies and boredom. To this end, workshops are designed which help teachers to learn more effectively how to operate standard equipment, prepare media and become more informed of the impact television has on the learner and how television meshes into school-community attitudes.

Summary

When a community and its schools join in a team effort to meet the needs of its children, instruction can be individualized to better meet the needs of "all" children.

Each child has a different style and mode of learning. Therefore, individualized instruction is an integral part of every learning environment. As teachers become more informed of media, they become better teachers and the children become the beneficiaries. We think the school-community publics should know these things. Hence, Elizabethton works hand-in-hand with all types of community resources. We feel everyone profits from these activities.

When you can, always advise people to do what you see they really want to do, so long as what they want to do isn't dangerously unlawful, stupidly unsocial or obviously impossible. Doing what they want to do, they may succeed; doing what they don't want to do, they won't.

James Gould Cozzens

COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDINGS NEEDED FOR SUPPORT
OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by
Dr. Betsy C. Heineman
Director of Vocational-Technical Education
Clarksville-Montgomery County Unified School System

What is vocational education? This question is forever asked by lay and professional people alike. Some honestly and seriously stab at an answer while others snobbishly verbalize and portray a below-standard type of education that stresses working with the hands and little need for mental ability.

Venn [1] stated, "Vocational education is being seen as second-class education and while it is perceived in this negative light, it is in reality successful and useful." If people were properly informed about vocational education, its "image" would improve. The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, in its annual reports, has stressed the importance of vocational education in helping to remedy the failure of our schools to educate all high school students to the level necessary for employability. The committee has stressed that the prevailing attitude--that vocational education is designed for somebody else's children--must change. This attitude has pervaded the thinking of some school districts which continue to emphasize the college preparatory program to the detriment of 60 per cent of the graduates who will enter the labor market after graduation from high school.

Barlow [2] commented on the changing scene in education and industry:

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It used to be possible to enroll the school failure--the one weeded out of the preferred pathway--in the vocational program on the pretext that if he couldn't work with his mind then obviously he could work with his hands. This was sugar coated by talking about students with many intelligences--mechanical, clerical, social, abstract, and others--but we didn't really carry the rationale into practice. Then technology played a dirty trick. In order to succeed in an occupation, the worker had to be able to work with his mind and his hands.

Brickell [3] found the school administrator as one of the dominant forces in educational change. It is reasonable to assume that the principal's viewpoints regarding vocational education contribute much to the degree of acceptance or rejection of this phase of secondary education and the way the program is carried out.

A 1975 study [4] provided evidence to support the following conclusions: (1) summer noneducational work experience of secondary school principals had a positive effect on their attitude toward vocational education; (2) the number of vocational programs in the schools had a significant, positive effect on the principal's attitude toward vocational education; and (3) the teaching majors of principals had a significant, positive effect on the principal's knowledge of vocational education. The study recommended that principals be required to complete at least one vocational education course designed to meet their needs.

As attitudes of school personnel are influenced by community forces, one can also appraise community structures as a step in changing attitudes of administrators toward vocational education. Although an administrator may have a positive attitude toward vocational education, he may have learned to reflect sanctioned attitudes of the group of community citizens.

Definition of Vocational Education

"Vocational education includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which specialized education is required, for which there is a societal need, and which can be most appropriately done in schools [5]." Vocational education is concerned with occupations requiring relatively short periods of specialized preparation to occupations requiring two or more years of specialized education. In the public school, vocational education provides instruction that develops the basic skill, judgment, and job entry-level knowledge sufficient to prepare youth for employment in agriculture, business, distribution, homemaking, trade, industry, health occupations, and other occupational areas.

Vocational education is specialized because courses or programs are elected by individuals who have a special interest in preparing for a particular

occupation or a related group of occupations. Vocational education is concerned not only with the manual skills involved in an occupation; it is concerned with all the competencies needed to function effectively in employment. This includes the cognitive and the psycho-motor skills required in a particular occupation. Obviously, the proportions of each vary greatly from one occupation to another; but, vocational education goes beyond the mental and the manual skills needed. It is also concerned about the attitudes and values of the worker--the affective domain.

Need for Vocational Education

The intrinsic value of vocational education lies in its relationship to the social and economic development of the nation. It has often been said that the greatness of this nation is not in its tremendous wealth but its ability to utilize wisely its human resources. Vocational education is a social process concerned primarily with people and their part in doing the work that society needs done. It is concerned with preparing people for work and with improving the work potential of the labor force. For people, this means economic independence, self-realization, and dignity.

In the early history of vocational education the emphasis was on meeting the manpower needs of society. While this is still an important function, the emphasis has shifted so that vocational educators are now more concerned about what vocational education can do to enrich the lives of the people it serves. Evans [6] has identified three basic objectives of any public school vocational education curriculum. They are: (1) meeting the manpower needs of society, (2) increasing the options available to each student, and (3) serving as a motivation force to enhance all types of learning.

It is true that the educational planner should be aware of manpower trends, and the most significant trend is the sharp reduction in the number of unskilled workers in the labor force. The shift from goods-producing occupations to service-producing occupations is another trend with implications for vocational educators, as is the increase of women in the labor force.

Those opposed to vocational education on the secondary level have frequently used the argument that options available to youth are reduced when they are encouraged to enroll in a specialized vocational curriculum. The solution often offered is the "general" curriculum, which has recently been discredited. Project TALENT, a study of students in the United States' high schools in 1961 by Flanagan and others [7], indicated that the general curriculum enrolls 25 per cent of the students, yet it produces 76 per cent of the high school dropouts. Furthermore, the study showed that the graduates of the general curriculum ranked behind both the college preparatory and the vocational graduates on nearly every measure of success including (1) proportion who go

on to college, (2) annual earnings, (3) job satisfaction, and (4) length and frequency of unemployment.

Student options are increased (1) when a larger variety of specialized vocational programs are available from which the individual can choose; (2) when vocational programs are offered by the public schools, as opposed to the vocational training provided by employers; (3) when high school programs are broadened so that youth are prepared for related groups of occupations, thereby giving them greater flexibility in the labor market; (4) when adult programs are readily available for the upgrading and retraining of employed persons; and (5) when job placement services are provided by the schools to assist youth in finding suitable employment.

Vocational education can be a motivating force to enhance all types of learning. If a young man with an enduring enthusiasm about auto mechanics is given the opportunity to specialize in his area of interest, he may come to recognize the importance of mathematics and science or even the ability to read (instruction manuals, if nothing else). These subjects may then take on new meaning and value for the learner because they may seem relevant.

Vocational and General Education

Conant [8] advocated that there were no separate goals in comprehensive education, but alternate means of reaching the same options:

To my mind, it is desirable for as many boys and girls in high school as possible to have an ultimate vocational goal. It may well be that many of them will change their minds before the high school course is over or in later years. But, if a student thinks that what he or she is studying in school is likely to have significance in later life, the study in question takes on a new importance. There is less tendency for such committed students to waste their time or have a negative attitude toward their school work.

Little [9] implied that vocational education is not a separate discipline within education, but is a basic objective of all education. It is all of those aspects of educational experience which help a person to discover his talents, to relate them to the world of work, to choose an occupation, and to refine his talents and use them successfully in employment. There is no longer room for any dichotomy between intellectual competence and manipulative skills, and, therefore, between academic and vocational education.

There are advantages of including vocational and academic education in the same school setting. There are also advantages of the separate comprehensive vocational center. Vocational education programs and academic

programs are most usually housed in separate wings in comprehensive schools. Would it not be ideal for the vocational office education program to be housed next to the English and research department? Why not house the electronics lab near the mathematics department? Why not place auto mechanics and the study of the combustible engine near an applied physics program? Vocational and general education should enhance and supplement one another in order to provide relevant, realistic curriculums for all students.

Building a Support System

To administer effectively any educational program, the administrator must understand the community, its historical perspective as well as its contemporary social milieu. This involves careful, systematic study of individuals, informal groups, and formal organizations--the positions they have taken on major issues and the alliances they have formed. The most critical point of analysis may well be how to minimize opposing forces. The educational leader must ascertain which groups have supported actions in the community related to occupational education and which groups have resisted such action; on which side various groups and individuals have aligned themselves in significant community battles; what positions various representatives of the mass media have taken on such issues; and which groups or organizations seem to have exercised the most influence both in deciding major community battles and in keeping other issues from becoming major battles.

Of utmost importance to building a support system in vocational education is the identification and involvement of three classes of people in the community: formal leaders of institutions or agencies who interact with occupational education; community influentials; and opinion leaders. The vocational administrator must also understand the dynamics of a variety of other communities and their leadership. Among the more important are students and faculty, organized labor, state and regional educational bureaucracies, industry, and the state legislature.

The administrator must use a variety of mechanisms to involve a community and to move it into his support system. These mechanisms include periodic surveys, advisory committees, cooperative education programs, job placement services, and public service functions.

Involvement is the key to the door of community interest. In order to effectively communicate with people, a planned and organized effort is required. A checklist for effective public relations would include the following: (1) stated goals and objectives, (2) adequate funding, (3) implementation schedule, (4) qualified, dedicated people, and (5) communications activities.

Stated Goals or Objectives. One of the main goals of vocational education is to provide every student with a saleable skill. Other objectives include:

(1) meeting the manpower needs of society, (2) increasing the options available to each student, and (3) serving as a motivation force to enhance all types of learning.

Adequate Funding. Our nation has the highest technical capability in the world, but this great technical capability means nothing unless we have technical and vocational programs that have the backing of the American people. Although one may obtain the best educators, equipment, and facilities, support is needed from the voters and funding from the local, state, and federal governments. It is beneficial to explain the economic stimulation from money spent on vocational programs. Charts may be used to depict the economic multiplier effect of a dollar spent for vocational education and how this education costs little in comparison to the tangible benefits derived from it.

Implementation Schedule. Nothing can ever be accomplished timely and efficiently without a schedule. A sound schedule is critical in order to spend funds wisely.

Qualified and Dedicated People. This includes teachers, students, administrators, legislators, and other community citizens. Vocational education not only has people who can do the job; there are also people who want to do the job.

Communication Activities. Various means may be used to gain support needed to accomplish goals in vocational education including radio and television interviews, and newspaper releases. Vocational programs are newsworthy, but information going to the press should be current and factual.

When speaking before groups, it is important to gear the presentation to suit that particular audience. If the speaker has interesting, honest, factual, and meaningful information, he will be asked to speak to many organizations throughout the year. A speaker may end with a statement such as, "If you like and believe in what you have heard today, write your Congressman."

Models and displays describing vocational education should be used in shopping centers, schools, and county courthouses. Brochures are good and should be acceptable to non-technical as well as technical readers. It is critical to make certain the materials printed reach the public and those people who can influence funding decisions on Vocational Education. Vocational Educators have been criticized for talking to themselves. Literature on vocational programs must reach the taxpayer, not just other teachers and administrators.

Plan for and Take Action

Educators must be knowledgeable of vocational education programs in order to adequately define and delineate the need for such programs. To be

able to support vocational education, the general public must understand the programs and objectives of vocational education.

Although vocational education is specialized education, educational leaders must assure nonexistence of a dichotomy between *general and vocational* education in the comprehensive school. Vocational and general education should enhance and support one another in order to provide the most desirable educational plan for each student.

Because of the growing need for more and better vocational training, it is imperative that educators identify, involve, and build a support system composed of community influentials, formal leaders, and opinion leaders. The key to community interest and support is involvement, and involvement and understanding go hand in hand.

* * *

"When the world seems large and complex,
we need to remember that great world ideals
all begin in some home neighborhood."

Konrad Adenauer

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THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

Dan P. Herron, Principal
Gallatin Senior High School

When the present principal of Gallatin Senior High School was appointed in 1963, a few major tasks seemed to warrant his immediate attention. Some of his early priorities were:

1. To arrange a meeting soon after his appointment whereby the new principal would have an opportunity to meet the teaching staff on an informal basis.
2. To schedule several meetings with the retiring principal prior to teacher re-elections so that he might provide specific recommendations concerning the teaching staff.
3. To communicate with the students and parents by mail prior to opening of school to outline the guidelines under which the school would be operated. This proved to be an important element in gaining early control of a somewhat difficult situation.
4. To talk with civic clubs, church groups, and other community organizations to seek their support in strengthening and improving the school.
5. To make a genuine effort during the summer months before school opened to clean up and to improve the appearance of the school.

DAN P. HERRON has been Principal of the Gallatin Senior High School since 1963. He previously was principal of the Gordonsville High School and the Fayetteville Central High School. His B.S. degree was earned at Tennessee Technological University and his M.A. degree from George Peabody College. He has served as president of the Lincoln County Teachers Association, the Sumner County Education Association, and the Middle Tennessee Education Association. He has also been chairman of the Middle Tennessee Principals Study Council.

Through the years many long-range objectives have been attained. The most significant accomplishment over the past thirteen years, however, has been the development of an outstanding teaching staff that is primarily interested in student needs. Year after year highly competent teachers have been added. As the stature of the teaching staff has grown, the support and enthusiasm of students, parents, and community leaders have increased.

Over a period of several years, numerous support organizations have played key roles in the development of a comprehensive school program. The local athletic booster club has raised thousands of dollars for the purchase of equipment and for the improvement of facilities. The principal and the athletic boosters have agreed that financial support is the prime function of the Quarterback Club. Surprisingly, this group has never approached the administration with direct or indirect pressure to make a coaching change.

Two other important supportive groups are also associated with the school. The Band Booster Club has been a hardworking and effective organization. This group has just completed a fund-raising drive that resulted in contributions of over \$15,000.00 for new band uniforms. The newest support organization is the Choral parents group. Because the school has over two hundred students involved in the vocal music program, a support organization seemed appropriate and necessary. The Choral parents group has purchased new tuxedos and evening dresses for the Concert Choir students. Recently, this group sponsored a Saturday evening performance by the University of Tennessee Concert Choir. An overflow audience attended this outstanding program. The Gallatin Senior High School Concert Choir has performed for the TEA general meeting, the Tennessee Tech student assembly, the Upper Cumberland teachers in-service and for many other school and civic groups.

There are a number of internal practices that help to build a sense of school and community pride. A Publicity and Public Relations Committee was organized to help improve newspaper and radio coverage. Students and parents appreciate the recognition that is provided for outstanding achievement. Recently, the local newspaper allocated a full page each month for a feature entitled "Green Wave Gallery." The journalism teacher, with the assistance of her students, uses this page to focus attention on the academic and the extracurricular accomplishments of GSHS students.

Each morning during the announcement period, the principal makes a special attempt to spotlight awards that have been received by individual students. If a school organization receives any special recognition, the award is announced and the group is complimented. A genuine attempt is made to stress the positive things that occur in the school and community rather than nagging or complaining about a few unpleasant events. Every attempt is made to handle unsavory situations quickly, firmly, and fairly. Both parents and students seem to appreciate and respect this approach.

Communication with parents, students and teachers is essential in the operation of a good school. Letters containing pertinent information for parents are prepared and mailed periodically. At the beginning of the school year, a bulletin outlining major school policies is made available to all students, parents and teachers.

At the Open House for our new school building, approximately three thousand people visited the school during a three hour period. Because of the enthusiastic response to the Open House, the decision was made to make this an annual Sunday afternoon affair. A faculty committee is finalizing plans for this year's Open House which will include a tour of the new Vocational wing that has been added at the cost of \$1,100,000.00.

The principal has enjoyed a cordial relationship with business and civic leaders. From time to time, the various civic clubs invite the principal to present a progress report relating to GSHS. During these talks, the community leaders are apprised of the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of the school. This person-to-person contact has been invaluable as the school has moved through integration, drug-related problems, and other major obstacles. To improve community understanding and to build support, special guests are invited to have lunch in the school cafeteria. Through visiting the school and by seeing the fine young people and attractive school building, these persons carry a positive message back to the general public.

Whenever a person in the community helps the school or the students in any way, a personal letter is written to them by the principal expressing appreciation for their support and assistance. Another practice involves the writing of a brief note of thanks by the principal to faculty members for their help on special projects or for their special accomplishments. Faculty members have responded to the notes with a renewed eagerness to go beyond the call of duty.

There are many fine programs which help to enhance the overall image of Gallatin Senior High. The school has an excellent marching and concert band. The Speech and Drama program is exemplary. This department produces and presents the senior play, a night of one act plays, and the spring musical. This year Carousel will be presented. In the past years, South Pacific, Oklahoma, My Fair Lady and Music Man have been performed before enthusiastic audiences.

The athletic programs have provided a rallying point for students, parents, and community leaders. The athletic teams have won state, regional, and district honors. It would be impossible for the Chamber of Commerce to place a price tag on the fine publicity that has come to the school and community as a result of the outstanding football and basketball teams. Because a solid base for academic excellence exists, there is a vital place in our school for athletics.

Several events are scheduled each year to break the normal school routine. The Football Homecoming parade is planned for Friday afternoon. Thousands turn out along the parade route to see the floats and boost the spirit for the game. After the game, the Homecoming Dance is usually attended by several hundred students.

Other important events scheduled are:

1. Faculty-student talent show.
2. Senior Day (Picnic Shelby Park).
3. Senior Night (Recognize senior basketball players and parents; dinner for players, parents, coaches and special guests after game).
4. Rotary Scholastic Awards Banquet (Top thirty seniors along with their parents are honored by Gallatin Rotary Club).
5. Athletic Banquet (All athletes are honored; speakers for this event have included Ray Mears, U.T., Bob Davis, Auburn, and Steve Davis, Oklahoma).
6. Junior-Senior Banquet and Prom (Dinner with dance following; approximately \$2,000 is set aside for band, decorations, and food).

School clubs and organizations provide a wholesome outlet for many students. Because the students at GSHS enjoy and respect the opportunities provided by the school, the new building is free of marks and other blemishes. The phase-elective program in English, eighteen full-time vocational programs, plus many other curriculum innovations have helped to reduce the frustration level of students. It is easy to see why teaching at GSHS is a very rewarding and satisfying profession.

THE STUDENT IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN DEVELOPING
GOOD SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by
Leolah Hodge
Curriculum Principal, Powell High School

Each school's PR program must be planned to meet the individual school and community needs. There are many groups or publics in each school community, and it is inevitable that the administration and staff must feel the importance and appropriateness of a PR plan to include each of these school and community segments. How educators relate to these publics will demote or promote public support for the educational program.

Community Publics are
Important in a PR Program

Who are some of these groups or publics who are important to our school PR program? To mention a few there are the custodial staff, cafeteria personnel, secretaries, bus drivers, parents, business personnel, professionals, college personnel, school board members, central office staff, community members, civic club members, church groups and the students; but the most important group of all these publics is the student.

Competent administrators and staff members must relate to each of these publics and it is most significant that they realize that happy, learning, productive and interested students are the most dynamic persons in any school

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public relations program. Students take home an image of the school each day whether it be a good image or a poor image. They reflect to the public the gauge of school morale and pride. In a high school where students possess pride and high morale, many students are involved in various curricular and co-curricular activities. These students are automatically the best ambassadors for the promotion of good PR in the school and in the community.

In any school the administrator must show genuine concern for the welfare of the students, and he must strive to provide a setting which is efficient and effective in order to successfully promote this student involvement in the total school program. It is essential that the administrator and staff emphasize the necessity of the student accepting his responsibility in school involvement. The staff and administration must also focus on student concerns in order to know the pulse of the desires and needs of the students and the members of the community.

Students Must Become Involved to Generate PR

Students are concerned about areas which affect them, and they will become involved in the school program if the staff and administrators truly desire and encourage this participation. A major student concern is the availability of courses in the school curriculum. This phase of the school program affects each student. Students and parents should have an opportunity for input in the curriculum development of the school. The courses to be included in the curriculum should be guided by the state and school system curricular framework, but it should also meet the needs of the students in that particular school. The administration, counselors and staff should spend many hours of discussing, guiding and surveying to determine the needs of the students, and this tremendous program of involvement with the students should precede the administrative announcement of the course offerings in the master schedule.

Not only should students have an input in the decision of the courses offered, but they should be involved in the final scheduling of their classes. This can be accomplished through a "walk through registration." At Powell High School this method of scheduling has generated much positive feeling among students and staff as they work together. This feeling is evident throughout the school environment. Students are actively involved, but they also have to accept many responsibilities in this "walk through" process.

An active program in dramatics can promote good public relations. When students are involved and working in activities they find beneficial and rewarding, they will promote them. Besides performing for school functions such as Government Day, talent shows and school play productions, various members can appear before all types of community and civic organizations. The senior citizens, church groups, alumni chapters, political groups,

elementary and junior high schools and PTA are many organizations which are continuously seeking student entertainment as a part of their programs. These are excellent experiences for the student, and it helps the public get a better picture of young people. In addition, drama students may work actively alongside civic groups such as the Jaycees as they sponsor charitable projects such as the "Haunted House." This can become a valid learning situation for students as well as a vehicle for public relations.

A school "Health Day" serves as a service project but it also radiates much student, staff and community interest. Fifteen years ago a "Health Day" was organized in Powell High School and each year approximately forty professionals, community leaders and parents assist with the student examinations. The vocational office education students serve as secretaries. With the appropriate staff orientation the student body, staff and the student secretaries have initiated an excellent PR program with the volunteer workers who are assisting and who are also representatives of the various community publics. Vocational office education students take much pride in typing the letters of orientation to the volunteer personnel, and they also send a letter of appreciation to each adult who assists in the project. The county's Health Department, Heart Association, Dairy Council, Medic, Dentists, School System's Special Education Personnel, Red Cross, parents, instructors and senior students from area hospital nursing schools and other agencies aid in this school project. Home Economics students may sponsor a coffee before school to honor the guests. Students may act as hosts and hostesses to the volunteer workers as they experience the eating of lunch with the students in the school cafeteria. Informational posters may be made by the students in the art, foreign language, physical education, health, home economics and other appropriate classes. Newspaper and TV coverage can be secured and the students take pride in this school publicity. The impact of student-community PR which this project reflects and the learning experiences available to a high percentage of students is of significant benefit.

Why not have a Government Day in the school? Invite elected government officials to visit in the school and provide a luncheon and a "Government Day" assembly program, and encourage the members of the drama department to perform. Suggest that students in the social studies department give a patriotic reading or brief patriotic skit. The student council might act as hosts and hostesses. The band and chorus could perform in the assembly, and students could have an opportunity in the assembly to communicate with government officials in an open forum. Have the newspaper and TV personnel available for publicity. During the Powell High School Government Day, much school pride was evident throughout the school as politicians and the students communicated.

An active instrumental and choral music department which continuously performs for the community churches, PTO program, special school concerts, civic clubs and which actively competes in educational contests is invaluable in the school PR program. A performance of a Broadway musical brings many

community members in contact with the students in the school. Band members add to the school-community PR through concerts and participation in various civic and patriotic parades. The half-time performance of the band at the football games certainly promotes excellent community PR. Many students are involved and they certainly sell the school through these musical performances.

Throughout the nation athletics is one of the more familiar co-curricular programs which involves a large number of students, and these activities afford a golden opportunity for the administration, staff and students to communicate with each other and with members of the community. The average large high school has students involved in five basketball teams, three track teams, three football teams, a golf team, a tennis team, a swim team and a bowling team. Most high school athletic programs have hundreds of adults attending the games, and the school is judged by the conduct, enthusiasm and school spirit portrayed by these students and players during these various activities. Just the presence of the administration and staff members at these school events is saying to the students and parents, "I am interested in our school," and this is important in building a good public relationship between the students, the administration, parents and the community.

A special time set aside for a "buzz session" involving the staff and students can be a helpful activity. The participants can discuss concerns and likes of their school, and this interaction aids in the bridging of the student-staff communication gap which sometimes exists. Also, the administration may try exchanging ideas in similar sessions with small groups of students and staff members. This may be a way of clearing some misunderstanding on the part of each party, thus promoting the opening of the lines of communication between the students, staff and administration.

The staff and/or students who become actively involved in civic, church and community groups inevitably promote effective school and community communication. The student may experience opportunities to expand the public relations program of the school by belonging to the Key Club, Jr. Optimist or other junior civic organizations. Staff members may belong to such clubs as the Kiwanis, Jaycees, Garden Club, Women's Club, Elks Club, Optimist Club, or work in worthwhile activities of the churches. Through the acceptance of responsibilities in recreational or sports activities of the county or city recreational departments, which are scheduled in the school facilities, the administration and students have opportunities to "learn and understand" many members of the public.

Most schools seek to involve students in school affairs through a student council or other active student organizations, and each school staff should develop procedures whereby student reactions to things about the school that directly affect them may be heard.

Community block meetings in the home with small groups of students, parents and the administration have been successful in some communities. This procedure may serve as another channel of communicating with some members of the community who do not attend school functions.

School publications such as the school newspaper, yearbook and an administrative newsletter may be sponsored by the school. This is a meaningful way of communicating individual or school achievements and school policies to all. Contact with personnel of the community newspaper should be continuous in order to have another means of publicizing student and staff accomplishments and information about school policies.

School and club sponsored social events which are planned by the staff, parents and the students may aid in the cooperative effort to establish good school-community relationships. Some events of this type are school dances, homecoming activities, PTA suppers, area Y-teen activities, Key Club socials, FHA socials, Charity Ball Dance and Queen and a Teacher Appreciation Tea. Would you believe a library full of students using the card catalog or whatever ingenious means to find a book with an Easter egg in it could be developed? That's the scene at our Library Club Easter Egg hunt in Powell High School. Students form a positive opinion about the library staff and the atmosphere of a library. Some other school sponsored activities which have meaningful purposes and can create much interest and communication in the community are: parties for an orphanage, the handicapped children or nursing home members. These activities are beneficial from the viewpoint of the recipients as well as meaningful learning experiences to the students.

A student tutoring program staffed by capable students and voluntary workers promotes PR with another public. Holiday baskets for the needy families in the communities is a popular project as a club activity. Memorial contributions in case of a death or serious illness of a member of a student's or staff's family is a courtesy which is always remembered. Valuable learning experiences in curricular ventures such as ecology laboratories may be coordinated with the TVA and other organizations.

Participation in school approved contests or activities which are sponsored by the community civic clubs or educational organizations promotes student involvement with various publics in the community. Some of these contests might be the Akima Poetry Contest, Exchange Club Youth of the Month Program, Victor Machine Efficiency Contest, Civitan Essay Contest, VICA Contest, Plymouth Trouble Shooting Contest, Driver Rodeo, Home Builders House Plan Contest and the American Legion Oratorical Contest. Some service activities which generate involvement of students and give them a feeling of caring and helping are the Junior Red Cross Drive, Walkathon, Telethon, Cancer Drive, Heart Fund Drive, Easter Seal Drive and other community supported drives.

Student awards in the Science Fair and of National Merit Scholarships are honors which initiate and merit much school pride. Entering an area social studies or English fair to display students' work and projects in a public place proves an excellent opportunity for community members to communicate with students as they man the station and discuss the school displays. This can be an added attraction for each PTA meeting.

Varied school cooperative programs with community business personnel such as the Quest program, Junior Achievement, vocational cooperative work program and distributive education programs generate communication about the school by the students to the co-op staff.

A PTA or PTSO recognition program for student achievements (certificates) promotes a large participation in the organization. Parents will come if their sons and daughters are recognized. Student participation in curricular or co-curricular programs promotes parent understanding and interest in the total school program.

The student can help to process the administrative newsletter or PTSO Bulletins by folding and addressing the bulletin to his parent. This can be accomplished in a designated five minutes of one class period. These bulletins announce the achievements of students and staff and communicate important school events and policies to parents.

The community school concept of permitting and encouraging groups to use the facilities of the school after school hours and weekends automatically adds to the public relations endeavor. The county or city recreation department, political groups, adult education classes, manufacturing groups, civic clubs and other properly sponsored community programs should be permitted to use the school as long as it does not interfere with the regular school program.

Other means for students to communicate with the community are speeches, brochures, telephone, bulletin boards, letters of recognition of student achievements, guests for lunch, small group discussions and student participation in political activities.

A telephone call a week from an administrator or staff member to give a positive comment to a parent about a student has proven to be a good PR project. A positive comment by a teacher to a student with problems may be a way to improve teacher-student relationships.

Summary

It is important that the administrator have a positive attitude about the school, and he or she must strive to promote and maintain communication in the school and the community. A good PR program must be built on true and

accurate information about the school. Appropriate informational programs focusing on the students always pay good dividends. Students tell it "like it is" regardless of the good or the bad; therefore, happy, achieving, involved students are the foremost PR persons in any school or community. If students feel the school program is worth supporting, they will sell it. There is no one planned PR program to meet all of the school needs; there must be a specific planned PR program for each school. The administration and staff must employ numerous means to reach the segments of each community and each means must reinforce the other, but the number one public relations person in a school and the community is the positively oriented STUDENT.

* * *

"There can be no stable and balanced development of mind and character apart from the assumption of responsibility."

John Dewey

Our ultimate aim in education is such continuous development of the individual pupil as will lead him eventually into the fullest and finest quality of available living, both social and individual. But there can be no adequate development to full social living of the desired quality except by living the responses that are to be learned and built into traits and ideals. This means that the school must develop community relations of a kind to provide opportunity for living all kinds of desired social responses What these community relations mean for the future development of the school, we are just beginning to imagine. They may lead to the entire transformation of the school as we know it. In any event, they beckon us on toward an alluring vista of wider educational activity.

William Heard Kilpatrick

THINGS PARENTS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR SCHOOLS

by
Arlandres Horton
Assistant Principal
Brainerd High School

A buzz of conversation filled the room where the couples had gathered after dinner. We seemed to enjoy this after dinner gathering because many interesting things were discussed. At times we shared the latest news, planned various activities, and discussed social and political issues.

This evening the conversation of Pat and Vivian drew most of the attention. Vivian was saying, "Today parents want to know about their schools. As a parent I am interested in finding out about the educational environment, the procedures, rules and guidelines of the school system. I want to know about the curriculum, the facilities, the enrollment, the qualifications of the professional and classified staff. As a parent, I want to know as much as possible about the school my children will attend."

By now the conversation had spread and all present were contributing. Frank made the suggestion that a list be made of what parents want to know about their schools. All agreed that this could be interesting as well as beneficial. The first thing on the list was the educational environment. "Parents want to know the role(s) that they play in the building of the physical facilities and curriculum," Frank stated. "We, as parents, play a major role since we pay a large portion of the tax bill to support education. We are entitled to know what is involved in the training and finished products of the school--the children. With many and varying ambitions for their children, parents are very much interested in what the schools teach their children and how the schools accomplish this task. Parents want to be involved and participate in curriculum planning."

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At this point the author agreed with Frank and added that parents should know which courses are required and which are electives. "Parents are concerned if these courses will prepare their children for the world of work or for college. For example, those parents who have children in the elementary grades want to know about language, the different types of writing and what courses are being offered in the different grades. Parents of kindergarten children are interested in what the kindergarten curriculum covers. The schools must inform the parents that the curriculum changes and that these changes are based on scientific research rather than theory or opinion."

Elaine stated, "At our club meeting last week quite a few mothers were concerned about discipline in the schools. We agreed that in order for a good educational environment to take place, good discipline is a must. The school system is responsible for setting down and enforcing rules and guidelines prejudicial to good order and discipline. We want to know what kind of discipline is used; who disciplines the student and how it is done. We must take into consideration that discipline should be thought of not as the control of outward behavior alone but the inner thoughts and feelings."

"When I was in school I was interested in the extracurricular and social activities," stated Van. "And as parents of today Beulah and I are very much interested in these aspects of school life for our children. We realize that these play an important role in the school program. Parents realize that learning is not just limited to the time that the child is in the classroom. Parents want to know how they can be included in these activities. This can be a great help in the area of public relations for the schools."

"What about the school's methods of teaching," asked Pat? "Speaking from a teacher's point of view I am sure parents want to know how democratic the methods, the planning that goes into each subject, and about the teaching skills. Parents often ask me about the ways that schools go about finding which group to help the most--the gifted or the slower ones. They are interested in the many teaching aids and the ways they help in the learning process."

"Children often tell parents that they have no homework. Parents want to know all kinds of things about homework. Even though most parents accept the idea of homework, there might be objections as to the kind and amount."

Mike began to speak. "The grades that children receive, the reports that come from the school and the promotion or lack of promotion are matters that touch the parents very closely. They want to know the methods that the schools use to arrive at grades, the promotion policy, and the schedule of the reporting periods. Parents want interpretation of a given grade. If it is an estimate of academic accomplishment, attitude, initiative or progress, they want to know. When parents visit my school, they inquire about the promotion basis, about retention and why."

Manzoor spoke of school services and how important these are. Information about the lunch program, the type of program, supervision provided, the food that is served is always welcomed. The facilities, the cost, the regulations are concerns of the parents.

Transportation plays an important part from the parents' point of view. Whether one lives in an urban area or rural area information is needed concerning the bus schedules, the number of the bus that the child should ride, and the route. As parents of children who ride buses, they want to know about the safety of the buses and the cost of transportation.

When parents inquire about guidance services, they are usually thinking of special services that the schools provide for the children. Examples are: do the schools help with personal adjustments, course choices, aptitude testing, career choices and scholarship? What about health services the schools provide?

"This has been enlightening," stated Sue. "Perhaps next time we can continue this conversation. There are many things that parents want to know about their schools. May I suggest that each of us bring an idea when we have dinner at the Daniels next week." "That is a good idea," we agreed.

As we made our way home, a pleasant feeling came over me. This was indeed a beautiful evening. Pat and I began to think of ideas for our next meeting.

* * *

"Mechanical means of communication have their important places; but they are only adjuncts. None of them can take the place of personal man-to-man contact."

William G. Werner

. . . meanings are not in messages . . . meaning is not something which is discoverable . . . dictionaries do not and cannot provide us with meanings . . . meanings are in people . . . meanings are covert responses, contained within the human organism. Meanings are learned. They are personal, our own property. We learn meanings, we add to them, we distort them, we forget them, change them. We cannot find them. They are in us, not in messages. Fortunately, we usually find other people who have meanings that are similar to ours. To the extent that people have similar meanings, they can communicate. If they have no similarities in meaning between them, they cannot communicate.

David K. Berlo
The Process of Communication
1960

GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
DEPENDS UPON IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

by
Dr. Sam H. Ingram
Commissioner of Education
State of Tennessee

The public concern today with the educational process in our public schools may be greater than at any time in history. This concern most certainly has generated many questions among educators from the administrators right down to the teacher in the classroom.

Are we adequately preparing children to enter the world of work? Can we more properly balance within the system our efforts in vocational education with the demands for broadening the curriculum in the arts and sciences? Are new programs needed, or do we need to improve old ones, particularly in the teaching of the basics? Can we improve communications between educators and the parents of the children in our schools?

These, of course, are only a few of the questions that are being raised, but they are the ones most often asked. The matter of communication between school and parent is of great importance, and may very well be the key to improving the quality of education in Tennessee. Educators, particularly those who have left the classroom to become administrators, program directors and

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consultants, may have in recent years lost touch with the public they serve. Those of us who travel across the state visiting schools, meeting with local educators, talking with teachers and with parents, sense that the need to open new lines of communication is greater than ever. Parents seem to feel that they are being pushed out of the schools, that they have no voice in what their children are taught, how they are disciplined in the classroom, and the funding of education, particularly at the local level.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the schools belong to the public, not to the educators. And we must constantly conduct ourselves and the business of education to assure that the public has a high level of confidence in our abilities to structure the system and to keep it in balance with the ever-changing needs. There is much evidence today that educators may not have the degree of public confidence that is so vital. Some of us believe that this lack of confidence is primarily because of our failure to keep communications open.

This responsibility falls to all of us in education, but must be shouldered by the teacher more than by any other. The teacher must be forthright and honest with the parent in discussing any aspect of the child's education. Thus, the teacher has the major role in our effort to regain that degree of public confidence. Educators have also been the target of some segments of the public, and in the chambers of the General Assembly, because of the rising cost of education.

Education certainly has no armor to ward off the inflationary factors with which we all must deal today. It is a fact that education is not adequately funded at either the local or state level in Tennessee. And there is just no way to avoid the rising cost of instructional materials, including such simple items as pencils and paper. The economic cycle is a vicious one, indeed. Teachers in Tennessee are grossly underpaid. So long as this situation continues, we generate more unrest and this is a threat to the quality of education. It must be turned around.

Educational programs mandated by the law-making bodies require funding just as those programs which are devised elsewhere. In Tennessee at this time we have new vocational education plants that we are having difficulty staffing because the money simply is not available. Neither is there anywhere near enough money in the foreseeable future to carry out the mandated program for the education of the handicapped children in our state. We also hear much across the state about overcrowded classrooms. While this is not the situation in every school district, it is true in many. As everyone knows, building costs have soared in recent years, and again construction for educational purposes is not exempt.

The answer to these problems is more funding. Developing adequate support for more funds and needed changes requires public persuasion. Thus,

the larger problem is one of demonstrating that the modern school, with its modern plant and its modern curriculum, is essential to meet today's needs.

Tennesseans have given education top priority down through the years, and while it appears that they continue to be willing to pay the cost, those of us in education need to be forever prudent and careful to the extent that the public can get the best educational system possible for the dollars spent. The need for greater understanding and support of education is urgent. Likewise, the commitment of each educator to the improvement of relationships between the school and the community must be genuine and viable. The future of public education depends upon this commitment.

In our society, individuals and groups have opportunity to develop many shades of opinion and viewpoint about schools and other public affairs. Especially in times of rapid change that is inevitable and desirable. Only so is enlightened and purposeful direction of progress possible. But operation of any public enterprise requires that working agreements be reached. After all opinions and viewpoints have been expressed and discussed, some decisions must be made about how we are to proceed with public affairs. Some kinds of roads must be constructed somewhere; some acceptable traffic laws must be formulated and enforced, or no travel will be possible. After the advantages and disadvantages of locating a new school on the east or west side of town are discussed, debated, and publicized, voters and a school board must make a decision, or no school will be constructed. Fortunately, our traditions of freedom to speak, think, and print create a spirit of give-and-take which makes common consent possible. Usually, if public discussion is thorough and fair, even those who have mental reservations about a final decision tend to accept it.

Gordon McCloskey
Education and Public Understanding
1967

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS--SAFE SCHCOLS

by

Dr. Gordon Irwin
Director, Liberal Arts Division
Motlow State Community College

This paper is on school vandalism and related crime problems. It belongs in this collection of readings on the community school as surely as does an article on Flint, Michigan, or the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. A basic premise in American educational thought is that schools should reflect their community. Given the rate of vandalism in some areas, something must be out of balance; otherwise, more communities would be on the verge of self destruction.

When schools truly serve their communities and are sensitive to local needs, a reduction in school vandalism and other crime is almost certain to follow. The challenge is to develop the school as a place which is responsive in a personal way to each member of the community. The school with more than a traditional seven and one-half hour program for 180 days each year can become a prized personal possession to be used, cared for, and protected. When the school becomes a true part of the community, no longer will it be a foreign enemy to be tolerated, avoided, or attacked when no one is looking.

School vandalism is now recognized as one of the major problems in public education today. It is a serious and expensive problem estimated in 1976 to cost \$600 million. In some areas students and staff alike attend school at risk of bodily injury. Almost daily, years of effort and sacrifice are lost as teaching materials and facilities are destroyed or otherwise lost to acts of

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vandalism or theft. In many schools the main concern has become survival not learning.

While vandalism, at least serious vandalism, usually occurs in vacant school buildings, assaults on teachers generally happen in those schools with poor school-community-home relations. Students failing to see respect for the school and staff from their parents are quick to question the teacher's authority and act with hostility at the slightest provocation.

Community schools do not just happen. They must be planned, created, and encouraged with great care. The two key elements in any community school effort are a planned program implemented by a dedicated professional staff. Yet obviously such factors as physical facilities and location have a bearing on how easily the desired program can be effected. Communities about to get new educational facilities have the greatest potential to easily and quickly effect a community school program.

At the time a school facility is planned, it can be easily developed to accommodate a wide variety of both day and evening community programs. When community members are encouraged to participate in the planning process, the personal feeling is encouraged and developed. The participants take away the message that the school really exists for everyone's use and is a part of the community.

Few communities have the opportunity to start over again and plan their entire educational plant to accommodate a total community school program, but Tipton County, Tennessee, was an exception. Faced with the realization that practically every educational facility in the county was inadequate, the County Court and Board of Education authorized planning for a center to house a total educational program from kindergarten through adult education. Working together, the teaching and administrative staff of the school system, county officials, parents, and interested laymen under the guidance of over thirty experts assembled by the School Planning Laboratory of The University of Tennessee developed a comprehensive community school program and physical requirements to support the concept. The Shaver Partnership then developed an architectural plan to best realize the defined needs. Provided the bond referendum passes in late summer of 1976, the Tipton County Educational Cultural Center will be constructed on a 200 acre site located at the county's population center. The center will not only house regular and special students grades K-12 but will accommodate a variety of special programs for pre-schoolers through senior citizens. Five elementary schools, three middle schools and a high school will be utilized to provide manageable-size educational units. A shared facility will house the separate and special programs. A few examples would include the extension of the public health department into facilities in the school, large gymnasium, large auditorium, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, public use library, facilities for academic and vocational adult education programs, space for extension courses by area colleges, a

demonstration farm complete with the necessary facilities including a show barn, and a variety of other facilities including play fields, courts, hiking trails, and picnic areas.

With something for just about everyone, and in use 18 hours a day 365 days a year, there will be little opportunity for vandalism here. This concept is a radical departure from the "fence the school and keep them out" philosophy which is widespread. The Tipton County project is different and perhaps more complete in both concept and facilities than others, but it is far from unique. Scattered around the country are successful examples of community school programs. All of these community schools reflect low incidents of vandalism. Included could be Flint, Michigan, Baltimore's Dunbar High School, and the social services educational center in Hamilton County, Tennessee.

There are several reasons for reduced vandalism in these and other community schools. Occupied buildings mean deviants attacking the school are more likely to be seen, reported and apprehended. Even when the school is occupied, neighbors and others passing by will probably take time to report an attack out of pride and concern for "their" school. There is even likely to be less hostility by youth allowed to use the school for recreational and social purposes during off hours even if a minor skirmish has occurred with a teacher during the school hours. Parents allowed to use the school will probably develop respect for the school program and staff. These positive feelings on the part of parents will likely be passed on to their children who will in turn think twice before incurring disapproval at home as a result of hostile school acts. Finally, being used year around the school facilities may be slightly better maintained and command more respect than the empty look developed by the typical school over the summer and other holiday periods.

There are hundreds of possibilities which might be considered in developing a community school program. The key is to develop a workable plan and start. Given hostile or at best indifferent attitudes existing in some locations, the start should probably be modest and developed on early successes rather than risking early failure of promising programs. And finally, even though it may be elementary to point it out, everything possible must be done to make students aware that the school is for their benefit. When possible, students may be rewarded for good behavior in positive ways. Some school systems have attempted to reward students for good behavior by setting aside funds at the start of a school year to be used for repair of vandalism. Surplus funds left at the end of the year then go to the school to be spent on school improvement as the students choose. A word of caution here though: the funds must be fairly distributed and used as the students choose; otherwise, the students may react adversely.

Community schools are not a magical answer for all school vandalism problems. Yet a sense of community will establish a stability in any school which will tend to reduce existing potentials for hostility and resulting acts

against the school and its personnel. Given the general educational benefit which will accrue from development of community school programs, their tendency to effect reduced vandalism cost is a significant additional benefit which must not be forgotten in developing successful school-community relations.

* * *

"... the bulk of mankind are more led by their senses than by their reason."

PARENTS' ROLE IN EDUCATION

by

Thomas H. Jewell

Superintendent, Meigs County Schools

President, Tennessee Association of School Administrators

Today we celebrate a birthday in American History: our 200th year of American growth and progress. We stand proud of our many achievements and have a right to feel as such. We are proud because we recognize sacrifices that have been made by many to make our nation great. We must continue to sacrifice if we are to continue our great growth and remain proud of our great heritage.

The social impact in today's world has left no school or school system undisturbed. Our priorities, values, and attitudes have taken on new meanings. History shows that American society has always turned to education for answers and solutions to its many social problems. If we are facing a crisis in today's society, one can only assume that the responsibility will fall upon education for its solution.

If education is to solve these many problems, then we must use all the ingredients in education for problem solving. My mother has been a person who has enjoyed cooking for many years, but she would not attempt to begin preparation of any meal until she had all the ingredients to make it a success. This is said only to point out that in education there are many ingredients necessary for success. I will mention only those that are of major importance to me. They are not listed by priorities, only that they are of major importance in educational problem solving.

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For success these ingredients will be teachers, students, parents, and community leaders. This leads us to our greatest concern: where are our parents? If, as some have said, parents no longer feel a need for involvement in education, then we are facing a crisis in education because we no longer have the ingredients to make education work. On the other hand, however, if educators feel that they are being threatened by parental involvement in education, no degree of success will be made.

Whatever problem exists between the home and school in today's society must be identified as soon as possible because any delay only leads to negative results for the child. We in education recognize our many problems and look to parents for many of our answers.

When teacher performance is being questioned by parents, legislators, and many of our leaders; when test scores become our major instrument for progress evaluation of children; when accountability of the teacher is of great importance to those who continue to hold salaries at the lowest possible level; and when teachers read that our state ranks 50th in money for education, the gap widens and, while this struggle continues, our children become more deprived of their educational needs.

As a former coach, I believe success lies in team effort. Each player must recognize his position to the team and be willing to work for the end results, not for personal gain or individual glory but a sincere effort to gain goals set forth by the team. Attitudes are often the results of successes or failures. The involvement of each individual is of great importance, as well as individual achievement and recognition, but only to the extent that the team benefits. Parents, teachers, and community leaders must lay aside individual differences for the good of the children, or they must be willing to accept defeat.

Past experiences on many different levels of education have given great insight into the need for a unified front for all those concerned in educational processes. We must recognize our failures and be able to learn by them. Communication between the home and schools must be open to express needs of the important place parents have in the educational process. It is not a question of who makes key decisions in education, but that the decisions are understood by all who are affected by it. The processes of decision making should involve those in education as well as those who support it by their tax dollar. If parents feel they are involved in planning and decision making, rather than rubber stamping those decisions which are already made, the support and confidence of all will be much greater.

Another concern for education is that more tax dollars for education are being demanded while parents and politicians are questioning the performance of educators, and present legislation is being introduced to establish standards of expectation for children. The gap between the responsible groups is widening and the child again suffers. We discuss problems in education but yet can't

identify these problems with any degree of success. Is it performance? Is it structure? Is it lack of money? Is it change in society? Is it the breakdown of the home? What is the problem? No problem can be solved until it has been identified with some degree of success. One thing for certain, it is not the lack of qualifications of teachers. This has improved greatly in the past ten years.

The negative attitude of many who are involved in the educational processes should be of great concern to all of us. If we are to advance and improve, first we must begin by thinking positive. There must be something good presently happening in education. The old saying that "if you are not a part of the solution, you are a part of the problem" must apply here. Test scores which we discuss lose their meaning when we realize that no test currently given was established or written for the children of Tennessee. Surely we must have someone who could establish or perfect tests which would apply to children of Tennessee, not California or some other state. Then we may identify what we are talking about. Can we not, in the field of education in Tennessee, find instruments of evaluating our own performance? If not, maybe it isn't as important as it seems.

What has caused our negative attitude toward education? Parents often say, "I am a working mother; I have no time to visit schools. I am busy." Sure it is true there are more working mothers, and we live in a busy world today; but what happens to our priorities? My answer to this problem is always, "I am busy; I love to hunt and fish and I find time to do so because I enjoy it. Should anything be more important to parents than their child? Surely he or she deserves a half day or day of your time during a school term. If your concern is for the child's education, time will be found for them. Excuses don't result in success, only failure. Parents are needed on a positive note, not only when the situation is negative."

Educators must assist themselves. They must know their weaknesses and strengths. They must know that if success is to be gained, parents and community must be behind them. Maybe a closer look at reality is necessary. There were several bills introduced in the 1976 legislature mandating by law these things which we should be doing ourselves. Too often our aims are established for us by those not in our profession. Is this because our weakness lies in not being able to police ourselves? Do we motivate our programs or accept them? Do we lead in education those things we know are best? Are we waiting for some other force to mandate our position?

Are students, teachers, and administrators alone? If so, they are traveling without those ingredients that make for success. Parents must understand we are all busy, but not too busy to care for our children. The educational team needs another player, an important one, the parent. Educators must make parents feel they are important and really needed in education. Teachers have done an outstanding job through a very trying time in education.

Students are often misunderstood, but still should be admired because of their struggle for a better education. In viewing the future compared with the past, let's move forward and not look back. We in education know that basic skills are being taught better than ever, with better trained teachers, more material, improved curricula, resulting in a much higher achievement by more children than in the past. Schools would be more successful with greater involvement from parents and the community in general, but educators will continue to move forward because of leadership ability, maturity, experiences, and motivation to achieve the very best in education for our children.

* * *

"Good public relations does not consist so much in telling the public as in listening to it. It provides a feedback that is otherwise lacking in the organizational structure."

EDUCATING THE SCHOOL BOARD

by

Dr. T.E. McGee, Jr., Director
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The method of selecting persons to serve on a school board varies from district to district. Generally, it is structured to allow all types of personalities to be eligible. They are entrusted with an important decision making part of the educational process. The quality level at which a school system operates is largely dependent upon the quality of decisions made by its board members.

In order to make sound educational decisions, a board member must have a broad base of knowledge. Ideally, a person should be well-informed on all aspects concerning his school system before he becomes a member of the board. This is a rare exception rather than the rule, however, and he usually has to be "educated" after he is selected. His education comes from various sources. Some school systems have formal, well-planned educational programs that start during the prospective board member's campaign and continue after he assumes his duties. Other systems leave informing the board to the superintendent; and, in a few systems, board members learn how their school system "should be ran" down at the local barber shop.

Regardless of how, where, or what board members are told, they are cast in the role of decision making for a social process that affects the lives of all their fellow beings. As important as these decisions may seem, they are often made with incomplete, misleading and inadequate information. There are reasons for this, of course. For one, remember that "school boarding" is part time work done with little or no compensation for services rendered. A member often has very little extra time from his regular job to spend educating himself for his secondary duties. The board member is seldom a career educator, so his own past experiences in school are outdated and only

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slightly resemble today's more modern version. Much of the educational jargon used today to describe the teaching-learning situation is not the same as a short decade ago. Even administrators are experiencing more pressures in fulfilling the growing responsibilities of their jobs to the point they have less time for "educating" each new board member on every aspect of the system's programs. We could go on and on . . . the point is an obvious one. School board members are in a difficult position. But all is not hopeless; board members can make sound decisions and display strong logic when they have adequate firsthand information from primary sources within their school district. Where is the best source for this information?

It appears logical, since the point at which the actual transfer of knowledge takes place is in the classroom, that there should exist a direct line of communication from this point. The lack of direct communication from this important source seems most critical. Too often the classroom is least considered when decisions are made, decisions which directly affect what goes on in those classrooms. The traditional, regimented channels of communication are often a detriment to progressive educational creativity. By the time a teacher's roar is passed from principal to superintendent to board, it becomes a watered down sigh if, indeed, it is not lost completely in the relay. The results can only mean a widening of the communication gap between board members and this most important source of primary information. If board members are to be properly and sufficiently informed to make intelligent decisions, they must receive information from "the trenches."

One method to insure continuous input from teachers would be a teacher advisory council. This council could be composed of a classroom representative from each school building within the system. It would be present at board meetings to supply needed information as viewed on the classroom level. (Teacher advisory councils should not be confused with teacher representation as is related to professional negotiations.) Selection of members to serve on the council should insure that all grade levels are represented and all wishing to serve have an opportunity to do so. Service should be voluntary and council members should be elected on a rotating basis by those serving.

The advantages for the board would be threefold. First, they could have firsthand information furnished by classroom level people in their own language. This would insure the information would not be misrepresented. Second, the information could be quickly and easily obtained; and, third, there could be an opportunity for one-to-one interchange of ideas between board and classroom teachers.

By inviting input before making decisions directly affecting them, the board implies a kind of respect that teachers deserve and would appreciate. The board not only broadens its base of informational sources, it also eliminates much of the resentment harbored by teachers for being excluded from the decision making process.

SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS: A CONSTANT CONCERN
FOR THE SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

by
Dr. W. Hobart Millsaps, Principal
Chattanooga Central High School

Introduction

In order for public education in America to attain its greatest potential, it must have positive support from the citizenry. Their interest and support are largely determined by their understanding of what is going on in the schools and why the school has certain predetermined objectives.

It is generally conceded that the primary objective of the principalship is to improve and broaden the instructional program and its perspective to meet in a better way the educational needs of the youth whom the school serves. A secondary objective is to interpret accurately all facets of the school's program through a well-planned and effective school-community relations program. To

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be successful in accomplishing these two objectives demands of the principalship much effort and dedication. Since it represents an endeavor requiring twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, some desirable qualities for the secondary school principal to possess are wisdom, empathy, and tenacity.

In America we have had a long tradition in involving many individuals in the effort to determine the educational and financial needs of public education. The methods of involvement change according to the changing values that individual communities put on the educational process. It is imperative that the principalship be cognizant of these values to interpret them accurately to the community. To do so is to enhance the effectiveness and support of the educational program.

Early in the fourth decade of the twentieth century when World War II clouds began to appear on the horizon, the federal government and industry started initiating training programs to increase job efficiency and industrial production. The JIT (job instructor training) and JMT (job management training) programs emphasized the necessity of adequate planning. One key statement was to "plan your work and work your plan." Currently, MBO is popular because management by objectives is a process to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization regardless of whether or not its product is a tangible or intangible one.

Likewise, adequate and wise planning using the sequential process may be used by the principal in determining a proper foundation on which to build an effective public relations program for his school. Five suggested steps are:

1. Formulate objectives
2. Establish procedures
3. Determine priorities
4. Allocate resources
5. Evaluate outcomes

In order to attain and maintain a positive attitude in a community toward its secondary school, much study, preplanning, and wisdom are required. "Wisdom" is defined as the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships, to have insight, and to possess good judgment. One of Benjamin Franklin's famous sayings was, "Tim was so learned that he could name a horse in nine different languages but he was so ignorant he bought a cow to ride on." The principal can ill afford to "buy any cows to ride on." In generating good public relations, he needs academic sophistication, adequate and accurate information, and the ability to generate ideas and ideals.

Practically every college textbook on public school administration has one or more chapters related to school public relations. The amount of the material on the topic is extensive and existing bibliographies are equally wide

in scope. Such attention thus gives credence to the belief that school public relations should have an important place in current school administration.

The procedures, techniques, and materials used in interpreting the schools to the community are varied and comprehensive. If the school administrator is to attain his desired objectives in his school's public relations program, he should be reasonably knowledgeable with regard to the administrative options that are available. He should ascertain the many facets of the community so that he may accomplish his goals. The principal cannot disregard the folkways and mores of a community and expect to have maximum support for the total school program.

It is desirable for the public school administrator to establish accurately the educational and economic potential of the community. Since a reasonable amount of financial support is necessary for desirable educational progress in the community, the principal should establish and maintain a positive relationship with the governmental power structure.

An anonymous statement that has been passed on jokingly at many educational meetings has so much meaning to the practicing principal that it would seem to bear repeating a version of it here, namely:

The objective of all secondary school principals should be to thoroughly analyze all situations, anticipate all problems prior to their occurrence, have answers for these problems, and move swiftly to solve these problems when called upon However . . . when you are up to your 'hips' in alligators, it is difficult to remind yourself that your initial objective was to drain the swamp.

Putting it another way, a principal needs the faith of Abraham, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, the empathy of John, the fervor of Paul, and the persistence of the devil.

Personal Qualities

For a secondary principal to establish a good public relations program, he should be concerned with his personal appearance and suaveness. He should be polite, polished, and gracious. A principal who looks the part and acts the part has, colloquially speaking, a lot of things going for him. To be dressed appropriately and to be well groomed foster personal and professional respect.

Punctuality is an important personal quality. Consistent tardiness to meetings and appointments may cause the principal to be known as "the late Mr. Blimp."

An administrator should not get so involved with the administrivia of the day that he will forget to notice and to speak to students and faculty. It is well to ask occasionally a group of students if he may join them at lunch. The students will be delighted, and it gives the principal an opportunity to meet more students, understand them better, and obtain their reactions regarding the school's programs.

The principal should always exhibit extreme courtesy. One cannot overwork the following expressions: "Thank you," "I'm sorry," "if you please," "pardon me," or "excuse me." "Good morning" is always appropriate in greeting students and faculty, upon arrival at school. "Have a nice day!" said with a smile gives a person a more humanly image. It is an exhibition of poor judgment when a principal fails to extend sincere courtesy to faculty, students, patrons, fellow professionals, and administrative superiors. To do so lessens his ability to communicate, which may cause his sense of values and emotional stability and maturity to be questioned.

Most people strive to have a positive identity; and it is enhanced when the principal commends and congratulates faculty members, students, patrons, and personal friends when they achieve any significant honor. A warm personal commendation is always welcomed by a recipient of an honor or award. A gracious personal note is always appropriate, and it increases the image of the person's office and of the writer. This is particularly true when a student gets special recognition which brings additional honor to himself and to his school. When a member of the faculty goes above the call of duty to serve any facet of the school, a letter of gratitude to that person should be forthcoming. Recognizing people in an appropriate and sincere way intensifies their positive identity and self-image.

To communicate with the principal's public, sincerity, empathy, and graciousness on his part should be evident. He must give his public a chance to communicate with him; thus, he must be a good listener. The principal can not afford to monopolize the conversation because to do so may create a more frustrated situation.

Often it is mandatory that the principal make an immediate decision. Sometimes the time factor is practically zero, and there is no alternative but to act immediately. Using the related information at hand with wisdom and empathy, he should make a decision and fear not. If it stands the test of time, he will be commended. If he finds later that his original decision was not logical or completely fair to all parties concerned, he should admit his error in judgment and rectify the inequities. Some consolation may be found in that fact that no one bats one thousand per cent as well as in the well-known adage, "To err is human."

William Glasser states in his book, Reality Therapy, that there must be proper resolution to solve certain problems. If having tried every procedure

and exerted maximum effort to solve the problem, we find ourselves unsuccessful, we should absolve ourselves. Some problems are not within our realm of solution; therefore, we should concern ourselves with those problems we can adequately solve. If, after proper resolution toward the solution of a problem, the principal finds no logical solution, he would do well to use absolution.

Professional Qualities

Let us consider some professional qualities. There is no substitute for professional or personal loyalty. We should be willing to defend our fellow professionals as long as we are justified in so doing. For a principal to be successful over a long period of time, he must have an intense feeling of loyalty toward his school, staff, students, community, superiors, and profession. There is a day of professional reckoning for a principal who is a negativist, an absolver of rightful responsibilities, an unmitigated critic, a character assassin, or a deceitful or hypocritical individual.

For the principal to have maximum input in professional associations, he must be an active and supportive member of his professional associations. It is expensive to run the gamut of professional memberships but generally it is wise to do so.

Two professional contacts that the secondary principal needs to keep active are college admission officers and student deans who can assist students in the admission process as well as in giving scholarship information, work possibilities, and educational loans. Another important professional contact is with the executive directors of foundations serving the area. Grants are available to some schools provided they meet designated criteria. Do not miss an opportunity to utilize all available resources of the local community and area.

An important tangible quality of professionalism is exhibited in personal correspondence. Personal stationery should be well designed, artistic, and aesthetic. A professional engraver and printer will assist in the design of distinctive stationery. Equally important are the letters one writes. This involves the quality of typing and the grammatical construction of the content. One of the most important persons on the principal's staff is his secretary. An excellent secretary is an invaluable asset and will do much to enhance his personal and professional image.

Generally speaking, the image of the principalship will be in accordance with the will of those who hold the office. To maintain personal and professional respect, each practitioner should be continuously concerned with the image he projects. He should exert great effort to assure the public that the image is a positive and professional one.

Cooperating with the Media

It is probable that the major source of school publicity will be articles published in the local newspapers. The secondary school principal needs to establish and maintain a cordial relationship between himself and the editorial and news departments of the newspapers. The executive editor is an individual whom the principal should know as well as the city and sports editors. It is advantageous to be acquainted with the reporters who are generally assigned to cover school activities. Always extend to them every possible courtesy.

The principal may intermittently visit the editorial, news, and sports offices and thereby cultivate the staffs' personal friendships and confidentiality. It is good public relations to host a luncheon at school in their honor at a time most convenient for the guests. Adequate and careful plans should be made for the visit, giving them a brief tour of the school and exhibiting to them the true perspective of the school plant, its academic and activities programs, and explaining the school's primary objectives. One may also wish to consider entertaining local radio and television personnel in a similar manner.

Even though the media personnel do not need tickets admitting them to school events, it pays dividends to furnish them individual or season tickets to school activities. This personal contact has its rewards, and media personnel will be grateful for this courtesy and the identity it implies.

The wise principal will appoint a publicity committee and chair it with a dynamic, resourceful, and academically sophisticated staff member. And he will appoint personnel according to their interests, abilities, and enthusiasm.

If the school offers a course in photography and has a well equipped photographic darkroom, this will be a great asset to the public relations effort. Adequate photographic equipment is needed, and good equipment is expensive. If there is a course in journalism, it can be used advantageously. If the school has some faculty and students with journalistic ability and if it also has a photographic laboratory, the school can produce excellent copy and glossy black and white or color prints.

An administrator should not permit the lack of photographic laboratories and equipment to dampen his efforts. Necessity is the mother of invention. Improvise, plan, and build a small photographic laboratory with creativity. It can be inexpensively equipped. A camera with moderately fast lens and variable shutter speeds can produce good negatives from which excellent black and white glossy pictures can be produced. This could be the beginning of a course in photography in the school. Most schools have at least one faculty member who would be interested in such a project.

School publications should be used to enhance the image of the school. It adds to the school's prestige for these publications to be professional and

distinctive in quality and appearance. Nothing less than best efforts in the utilization of available resources should be accepted. It takes determined and positive leadership on the part of the principal in the school's effort to put its "best foot forward." The same effort is necessary on the part of faculty sponsors and their individual staffs of the school's newspaper and yearbook. The productions of these publications are expensive and the school and sponsors must operate within the realm of realistic financial resources.

Student handbooks contain much information not only for students but also for patrons. Parents can be informed regarding school programs, procedures, and policies. For the handbook to be more readable, its contents should be well organized, reasonably brief, and have "eye appeal."

For radio and television publicity, personal contact with station and news managers should be maintained. Special events can be announced on the air and, if desirable, can be taped at school for radio or television programs. The FCC requires a specific amount of broadcasting or telecasting time to be given in the interest of the general public; so, the principal should formulate plans which will show the school's positive side. Many schools now have closed-circuit television and their TV cameras will make tapes. This is another opportunity for ingenuity and imagination to run rampant.

Contacts with Governing Boards

The fiscal governing board may be identified as the county council, city commission, board of governors, school committee, or by other names which imply that they have the responsibility of approving the education budget and setting the tax rate to defray the cost of the budgeted educational expenditures. The principal will find it advantageous to know personally this group of distinguished citizens and to use his fiscal expertise in supporting the superintendent of schools and his staff in formulating the department's budget. He should consider making proper contacts with the governing board, urging them to finance adequately the educational program within the system. This should be done with the knowledge of the principal's immediate superior and with adequate expertise in comprehending the fiscal problems involved.

It is good public relations to have the fiscal governing board as guests of the school. They might be invited as luncheon guests and served through the use of the school's home economics department. The principal becomes better acquainted with the group and they get to know him personally. Good food and good fellowship assist in making good human relations. The young ladies who are involved in the home economics classes will be delighted and honored to serve the distinguished group. Some of the school's key personnel might also be invited to join the group whereby the visitors can be more specifically informed of the many facets of the school. To have a newspaper photographer there at the appropriate time makes good news as well as good

sense. A typed press release should be ready for the photographer when he finishes his task.

For the administrative governing board, many of the same procedures mentioned previously can be used to good advantage. The principal needs to know personally the members of the board of education and to have a close relationship with as many of them as possible. They need to know him and his school, and they will generally relish the opportunity to see one of their schools in action.

A great majority of the central staff is in constant contact with the secondary principal. He should always be respectful of their offices and have an open and cooperative attitude in assisting them in fulfilling their assigned responsibilities. They, too, have restrictions and limitations; so he should be empathetic in his relations with this group. This enhances his chances of receiving an attentive ear. It is true that "honey attracts more flies than vinegar."

In the administrative offices of larger school systems, there are many secretaries serving administrative personnel. These ladies are important individuals to the secondary principal, and it is beneficial to his school for him to maintain rapport with this group. An idea that has been mentioned before for other groups is to honor them at some special event during the school year.

As has been noted, in the entertainment of guests at many luncheons, the home economics department plays a most important role. A principal should never forget to express his gratitude to the home economics staff and the students who assist in preparing and serving the food. An appreciative note for the department's bulletin board is a morale builder for teachers and students. The distinctive service the department renders to the school by serving many groups during the years demands that the principal do all in his power to support the home economics department in securing its total needs. The department's efforts are very important in attaining and maintaining desirable school public and human relations.

Intra-School Relations

Volumes have been written on this broad topic. Consider the following facets which are not all-inclusive: faculty, students, alumni, parental groups, and custodial staff.

The secondary principals, too, need to remember that "something good can come out of Nazareth." All positive and functional ideas related to the administrative and instructional programs need not come from the principal's office. Many should come from that office, but the principal should be in tune with many groups in and out of the school. The progressive principal cannot

afford to be a negativist. He must have absolute trust in the judgments of many concerned individuals. He must be a good listener, and he must be available to his "constituents"--who are many.

The principal will have many ideas in regard to improving the total school program. These ideas may relate to the instructional, activities, or athletic programs. Some will be in the area of administration, supervision, or staff evaluation. The principal should be diplomatic and deliberate in his planning and thinking; however, he should not let all the ideas emanate from his office. The principal will plant fertile ideas within his staff and this group will do mass thinking in a positive critical way. They, in turn, will develop alternatives and suggest objectives, procedures, and evaluation of these innovations. If this situation prevails, he has accomplished a major objective in that his original idea becomes theirs. An astute principal turns his faculty loose to let them think and plan and work. This gives him an opportunity to be a good follower. One of the prerequisites of a good leader is to be a good follower.

Faculty. For the faculty to function most effectively, academic and social togetherness is of paramount importance. Good public relations within a school demand that a team effort exists. Some examples for accomplishing this would include sponsoring faculty picnics, planning formal dinners, issuing complimentary tickets for all school activities, establishing faculty service awards, and giving stipend assistance for further study.

Students. The late '60's and early '70's were tempestuous years for secondary school administrators because it was a time of student dissent. Many high school students thought it appropriate to rebel against conformity. Some students even sought negative identities and were head-strong in trying to force certain rights and privileges in formulating basic school policy. They possessed awareness and wanted involvement. Positive awareness and intelligent and diligent involvement can make a good team. The major problem is to give it proper direction. Students need to be heard because that is part of their development. Their actions can be wisely directed by using varied types of student involvement. The following are suggested:

1. The student council is a potent force in having discipline in the school as well as an instrument whereby students can have an avenue of rapport with the administration of the school.

2. The principal may want to have a group of students to whom he can go to "feel the pulse" of the student body. Consider forming a student advisory committee (SAC), for example.

3. A school may need a human relations committee if racial conflicts have a tendency to be existent. The basic purpose of this committee would be to investigate circumstances and/or conditions in the school that would have a tendency to cause racial conflict.

4. School service and academically oriented clubs have an important place in the total school program. They can be advantageously used to enhance the image of the school.

Alumni. The Alumni Association is a most important organization to assist the administrative staff in many facets of the total school program. The members can assist the school in attaining needed financial support and, in turn, can give support to other schools in the system. They are a nucleus around which many interested and concerned people will give much needed assistance. It behooves the principal to be an integral part of the Alumni Association's program and to attend scheduled meetings of its executive committee. The principal can give intelligent directions to the alumni groups' efforts and he should exert positive leadership, remembering that the school cannot reach its greatest potential without alumni support.

Parental Groups. Parental groups can engender good public relations for the school. P.T.A. does not necessarily mean "plenty of trouble ahead." These groups need to confer regularly with the principal and keep him advised as to their intended projects. There needs to be coordinated effort in order to prevent misunderstandings and misconceptions among the varied groups. Their intentions are basically good, and the principal should have a general idea of their plans to assist the school. Various staff members can be appointed to meet regularly with the parent organizations and keep the principal accurately informed. The principal should work cooperatively with these parental groups and give them an attentive ear when it is requested.

Custodial Staff. The custodial staff is an important cog in the school's total effort. A responsible and rational head custodian can do much to decrease problems related to proper care and maintenance of the school plant and campus. It has been said that "cleanliness is next to Godliness," and that is a job for the entire school family. Every person associated with and interested in the school should be concerned about the school's appearance, inside and outside. It is a process of awareness for all concerned, and it can be accomplished only by being continuously cleanliness conscious. A custodial staff that takes great pride in fulfilling its task is truly a great asset to the school.

Since it is probable that nine out of every ten people who see the school see it only from the outside, the external care and appearance of the buildings and campus are of utmost importance in creating a positive image of it. Outside night lighting can be dramatic in effect and enhances the security factor for the school. An aesthetic building with a campus that is adequately and appropriately landscaped and groomed adds much to the prestige of a school. The public may subconsciously and even accurately judge the academic atmosphere within the school by its outward appearance. How can one expect the citizenry to vote a tax increase for education when the schools are not adequately maintained and their campuses are not attractively groomed at all seasons of the year?

Inter-School Relations

The personal and professional qualities of the secondary principal play an important part in his school's ability to be a part of the school's total team effort. The competitive factor between schools should be positive; and it is highly unprofessional for a principal to use tactics or procedures to aid his school if, in so doing, it decreases the effectiveness and stability of another school in or out of the system. If one can't speak with charity toward another school, then "silence is really golden." If the Golden Rule is put into professional practice, there will be few retaliatory measures by fellow professional cohorts. There should be a team effort within the system, area, state, and nation. To strengthen the total program of secondary education within America, we must strive to attain our individual objectives as well as strive to improve the total program of our nation's schools.

Many states now have activities associations which control the inter-scholastic program in athletics, music, dramatics, and forensics. A principal should try to reserve some time to study and to know the regulations governing the control of inter-school activities. Good inter-school public relations demand that the principal have a professional attitude and perspective and work within the total framework of the team effort governing inter-scholastic activities.

Finally, the principal should accept every invitation to serve on committees evaluating sister schools for accreditation purposes. Both the evaluator and the evaluatee can gain tremendously from this area of service.

Community Relations

Feeder Schools. A concerned secondary school principal will show an interest in and a concern for the feeder schools in the area. Equal concern should be exhibited for the elementary school as well as for the junior high or middle school. It is good school relations to visit these schools and to keep in contact with their principals and staffs. They are building a foundation for the secondary school's total program, and great interest should be shown in their programs and in their accomplishments.

On occasion, the principal should attend parent meetings at these schools and let parents know he is supportive of the educational efforts for their children. Good relations between the school staffs and parents will narrow the psychological and emotional gap some students develop when transferring to the next school with higher grade levels.

School Facilities Available. Another facet of good school-community relations is to have the school facilities available for late afternoon and early evening activities which would be of interest to many of the community's young people and adults. A well planned and adequately supervised athletic and/or

recreation program can be an asset to the community. Individual sports, such as tennis, badminton, track, and golf can be sponsored if facilities are available. Team sports with community leagues may be sponsored in baseball, softball, basketball, and football.

Night classes for all who are interested may be opened in art, modern mathematics, IRS (Income Tax) instruction, open forum, current history, psychology, economics, health, first aid, creative writing, philosophy, modern languages for the traveler, and woodworking. Some classes in the above mentioned areas can create much interest for many people in the school's area of service.

This type of service by the school must have faculty, student, and parental support, and it requires careful planning and supervision. The school needs to be involved in formulating the policy governing these endeavors in order to avoid conflicts in scheduling and, equally important, to assure proper use and care of the school's total facilities.

Civic and Service Clubs. Contact should be maintained with the civic and service clubs of the community. The local Kiwanis Club sponsors a Key Club for high school students and the Lions Club sponsors the Leo Clubs for secondary school students. With adequate planning by the school's club or activities coordinator, these types of student clubs can offer excellent opportunities for students to become service club oriented.

Key Leaders of Business and Industry. It is important to make a conscious effort to meet and to know key leaders of business and industry in the community. Many school systems and local industry and business jointly sponsor Business-Industry-Education days where schools visit industry and industrial and business leaders visit schools. An organized effort in BIE planning is an asset to all concerned and the program has great potential.

Patriotic Organizations. Cooperation with patriotic organizations--such as Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Legion, and the Freedoms Foundation--is a must. Some give awards to deserving students, which is an excellent project in that it gives students an opportunity to attain recognition. Cooperate with the Armed Forces Day committee by building a school float using art and industrial art students in the task. A valuable learning process is involved. Also, the marching band and junior ROTC units are usually requested to be a part of the parade. This promotes good public relations by giving the principal an opportunity to meet personally and to know many key community leaders.

Community Churches. The churches of the community deserve the principal's cooperation. He should visit with various denominations when it is

convenient and appropriate. Many patrons will appreciate his concern about moral training for the youth of the community.

Political Interest. The intensity of the political arena varies greatly. In some systems, professionalism reigns supreme; in other systems, the condition for advancement is not determined by "what you know but whom you know." An appointment for any reason other than that of professional training and expertise may be short-lived because nothing is so consistent as political inconsistency. The principal can and should take a political stand when necessary for his professional stature or for adequate financial support of his school's and his system's total educational program.

In controversial matters without a moral issue, and in those which do not affect or involve the school, intelligent neutrality may be the most desirable position.

CONCLUSIONS

1. For a public relations program to attain its greatest potential, the school must have a distinctive and functional educational program which meets the multiple needs of the youth it serves.
2. All facets of the school's program should be positively identified and accentuated.
3. The material presented to the public should be presented in terms which can be understood by the great majority of the community.
4. All public relations procedures should be sincere and accurate.
5. The public relations endeavors should be reasonably continuous in order to keep the community conscious of its school and its program. Generally speaking, the more spasmodic the school's public relations effort, the more insipid it becomes.
6. The public relations program is a cooperative effort and those involved should have a knowledge of and a concern for mutually established objectives.
7. For the public relations program to have proper credence, an atmosphere of professionalism must emanate from the principal's office.
8. It is a professional effort and should be conducted in an ethical manner. To do so enhances the total image not only of the school but also of public education in general.

9. There must be an accurate awareness of positive public relations by the school and community--an awareness which therefore necessitates involvement for the principalship. His contacts, observations, and evaluations should be personal. This will encourage others to give opinions and suggestions which will improve the effectiveness of the school's public relations endeavors.

10. At proper intervals, the public relations program should be carefully and professionally examined and evaluated if it is to attain its greatest potential. Continuous concern for improvement should be of paramount concern to the principal and his staff.

* * *

"School people may find themselves longing for the good old days when nobody paid attention to them. But criticism and second-guessing by the layman are at least in part a positive mark of public interest, and the price of public support. The taxpayer is justified in asking us to remember the ancient proverb, 'If you would have a hen lay, you must bear with her cackling.'"

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES

by

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Since the days of John Dewey [1] and Charles W. Eliot [2] of the early 1900's schools have been encouraged to become community schools and to involve citizens in the planning and direction of the schools. Apparently schools in the main have not accepted this challenge of community involvement and have not been successful at this task. How many schools are open at least twelve hours a day for twelve months a year? How many schools utilize citizens advisory councils to provide counsel and advice on educational decisions? How many parents know and understand the philosophy and objectives of the school in which their child is enrolled? Were the parents consulted on what the philosophy should be? If schools are to be operated "by the people and for the people" the public needs to be involved.

The conception of experience as a process of interaction on the human level of experience involves both the individual and the environment. Both factors are essential components of an experience. The subject matter corresponds to the environment in a manner that the student corresponds to the individual. The environment is essential for experience; the content is essential for the educative process. Therefore the very nature of learning implies school and community interaction.

One task of the advocates of education over the years has been to relate school education more closely with community life needs, thus developing curricula that are more vital, more functional, and more realistic. Many of these advocates have indicated that unless living is linked with learning,

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education will fail its basic function regardless of how well the profession of education develops theory, or how smoothly educational administrators operate schools, or how thoroughly teachers maintain classroom control. Two-way bridges must be built between the school and community in order to facilitate the opportunity for children and adults alike to study and to serve the community. Many pages have been utilized in the literature of the education profession to advocate the community-school concept. Citizen involvement seemed to reach a peak during the 1950's before starting the decline. Recent efforts in the past five years (a few which will be referred herein) have issued a call for various emphases on school-community cooperation.

An examination of the many commissions, panels, and other groups recommending reforms in education during the 1970's provides evidence that a concern exists for citizen alienation and the low level of community involvement. As has been the concern throughout the history of American education, the consensus of the present day reports indicate that the school will not be able to achieve its purpose without increased help from the people in the community it serves. For example, the reports of the National Commission for the Reform of Secondary Education [7] and of Task Force '74 [6], which deal with reforms in secondary education, either require or imply community involvement. Of the recommendations made, thirteen deal specifically with implied or required community participation.

The school has no choice but to work in cooperation with the community and to reflect the will of the people. This responsibility has been discharged in various ways. Task Force '74 [6] defined community involvement as input from citizens to educational institutions in order to improve their functioning. Educational administrators have not made the effort necessary to mobilize community interests, energies, and resources for education. The concern of educational administrative personnel has been to determine how much and which of these interests, energies, and resources to generate and if proper controls can be employed once the activity is activated.

The modern school of today involves lay citizens in many facets of the school decision-making process. Dynamic school administrators who supervise the operation of effective schools seek counsel and advice of responsible lay citizens and groups in planning school policies and maintain continuous involvement throughout all facets of the program including evaluation of educational efforts. Involvement of this type requires that the school practice and promote good communication and human relations in all areas of its activity.

It is not enough to utilize the vast wealth of community resources to expand, enrich, and vitalize curricula. The educative process itself should be utilized to assist in the purposes of community development. The suggestion intended is that the community can assist and serve the schools and the schools can help improve the quality of community life.

The utilization of lay participation in educational planning can provide one of the most efficient means of improving the educational decisions which are made and it also informs the public about what is happening in the schools. There is mounting evidence to indicate that wherever schools have involved citizens in the decision-making process and in advisory roles, these schools have been superior to what otherwise might have been expected had the citizen involvement not occurred [4].

What is the problem? Why is cooperation and participation at a low ebb? Why does the alienation and controversy toward the schools exist in the community? The problem may be due in part to the lack of understanding, the lack of information, and the lack of trust for each other--the school and the community. These problems are not usually related to school problems, but are in many instances self motivated by individuals and/or groups either in the schools or in the communities. Possibly, both the school and the community are at fault. However, if the populus were asked about their position on education, the overwhelming majority would indicate that they believe in and support education. For instance, a 1973 Gallup Poll in education revealed that 97 percent of those polled believed that schools are important to the future success of the student [3]. They favor the schools and educators and laymen, given the opportunity, will work together for the good of the schools and the community.

What is the solution? How does a society insure school-community relations to a degree that both reap benefits? Most of the responsibility rests with the school administrators. They must develop and exhibit faith and trust in people and possess leadership skills necessary for confidence in dealing with community participation and cooperation. A procedure must be developed for community involvement in the schools. Federal programs in education have assisted in formalizing community participation. Guidelines for Title I and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act established specific types of citizen participation in these types of programs.

How is participation initiated? The first assistance a lay citizen can render is likely to be of a general nature. They will need to be in situations for which they are qualified and feel confident, such as talking to a class or small group. From this beginning as a resource the person can move into other areas of participation. Involvement is eminent as most people want to become involved and will seek responsibility if they do not feel threatened or if this responsibility is not thrust upon them before they are ready for it. The range of involvement is unlimited and extends from serving informally as a resource person to serving formally as a member of the school board. One important level of participation is membership on a citizens advisory committee at the school and/or district level.

A systematic review of community participation in education through formal and informal approaches identified three levels of citizen participation: (1) collecting and assembling information, (2) classifying and interpreting data,

and (3) making judgments and developing recommendations [5]. Citizens advisory committees have demonstrated their value to school communities across the United States.

Appointment to committees is critical. Decision about whom to appoint and whom to avoid is debatable. Do you only appoint "friends" of education? Should the membership represent a true cross section of the community?

Thirteen points which could provide direction in establishing citizens committees and evaluating their procedures and the results of their work were developed with the assistance of 32 nationally recognized experts in school public relations. These data were revealed in a study at the University of Colorado [8].

A clear-cut and well understood distinction between citizens committees and school boards is essential. However, any subject related to the improvement of the local school system and program is appropriate for advisory committee study.

Once the group is organized, many lay individuals shy away from participation unless some type of public recognition or status is granted. These lay advisory committees should not be organized unless there is a felt need in the community. Sometimes educational leaders have to develop an awareness of this need for citizens participation. It is to become a work group and not a means of airing opinions that are without foundation. The process of working out the answers is as important for these groups as are the conclusions. Lay participation on solving educational problems can result in lay awareness of these problems. An active public interest in schools will be essential in order to overcome the many difficulties which the schools face today.

The main problem is how to arouse such interest throughout the school community. Nevertheless, the fact remains that education is a total community process. The community comes to appreciate those things it helps to create.

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Leadership is a process of stimulating and aiding groups to define common goals and to devise voluntary means of moving toward them. Leadership is the structuring of voluntary group behavior. Leadership includes means of providing facts and ideas which help groups to define and reach objectives intelligently. Leadership involves making arrangements which facilitate constructive interaction between group members.

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PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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"Public information" as applied to education may be defined as part of a larger public relations or community relations program. Although all three terms often are used interchangeably, "public information" may be characterized as primarily a one-way system for informing public groups about an educational organization and its programs, usually by means of print or electronic material prepared by the organization for the mass media but also involving institutional cooperation with media-initiated coverage of the schools.

The above concept contrasts with that of "public relations," which is a program of two-way communications between schools and their various internal and external publics, involving interpersonal and impersonal, formal and informal contacts, and designed to promote public understanding of and support for education.

Although there are many reasons given for having school public information programs, some of which have little support in research and literature (e.g., an informed public will support higher expenditures for education), there is one basic need filled by an information program: to enable the educational organization to communicate with large numbers of persons, in a short time, and at a low per-person cost to the organization. Implied is the assumption that every school system or educational organization will, from time to time, so need to communicate.

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When the need arises, a public information program geared to an awareness of the functioning and potential of the mass media can be of considerable assistance. Mass media may be defined as independently owned and controlled newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and other elements as they develop within a community, such as cable television systems, which serve as channels of communication with large numbers of citizens within that community.

A national study [1] of public information practices among school systems of different enrollments found that districts with fewer than 12,000 students did comparatively little to communicate with the public through the mass media. A study of entries in the Tennessee Education Association's School Bell competition over the past several years confirms that news coverage of small systems by local newspapers largely was limited to the business of the board of education, sports, and other extracurricular events. There apparently were few stories about education which resulted from the initiative of school system administrators.

The need for organized public information activity among the smaller systems of the country actually may be greater than that of larger districts. A survey of administrators' perceptions of the news coverage received by small school districts indicated a high degree of dissatisfaction with newspapers and broadcast media which emphasized the surface events of education, such as athletics and extracurricular activities. The survey returns thus seemed to indicate that those systems which needed public information programs most, in terms of communicating with the public through the mass media, actually were doing the least to bring about these programs.

What can be done? First, school administrators need to be aware of (1) the need for such activities, (2) the public's right to know about how tax dollars for education are being spent and the results being obtained, and (3) the range of opportunities for communication afforded by the mass media. Too often school administrators seem to be satisfied with a "low profile" approach to public information; then, when there is a need to communicate with the public, the ability to do so often is lacking; or administrators content with a "no news is good news" posture may find themselves contending with newsmen attempting to cover controversial stories without adequate background or understanding of public education.

Commitment among top educational administrators, including superintendents, their assistants in the central office, and principals, is the most essential ingredient of a successful public information program. If such commitment is present, a school district of almost any size can develop public information programs.

A full-time person serving as a school system public information officer is desirable but not essential. In these times of continual budget crises,

small systems may not be able to afford such a person. The alternative is to identify a person who will be responsible for contacts with the mass media. This may well be the superintendent himself, since much work of any chief school officer is public information/public relations in one form or another. Even the smallest system should have at least one system-level person designated to inform local journalists about story possibilities, to invite reporters to the schools on a regular basis, and to assist them in arranging interviews and securing information. To do this, the person need not be a skillful writer or even a public information specialist.

An elemental, little used, and (on balance) highly effective public information technique is a weekly meeting between the superintendent and representatives of the local news media. True, there may be some embarrassing questions asked, but these often will be based on local "talk." The superintendent will have a continuing opportunity to present his/her perspective on local school needs and problems, and he/she will benefit from the type of media exposure which Presidents and other national figures have learned to use to their and their organizations' advantage.

Specific courses in school public information practices offered by colleges and universities are limited, and these often are taught by members of the education faculty who themselves have little experience in working with the mass media. Lindley Stiles [2] made a powerful case for cooperation between colleges of communication and education within a university in preparing educators to serve as public information specialists.

Interested administrators should enroll in any courses offered by institutions of higher education but should supplement these with personal reading, attendance at professional meetings, and local contacts with media representatives. A few dollars a year invested in publications of the National School Public Relations Association will provide a wealth of information. Much also can be learned by visits to local newspaper and radio/television offices. Not only can the educator learn about technical requirements of local media, but he/she also can help inform editors and reporters about the local school system. Many journalists are not familiar with education, find it difficult to grasp education jargon, and may be unaware of many opportunities for news stories which exist in education. It thus may be possible for mutual orientation to take place, with the school administrator and journalist "educating" one another about their respective fields.

In making a commitment to cooperate with the media, educators must overcome an almost emotional objection to having anything which deals with school problems printed or broadcast. It is an axiom among public information/relations specialists that an organization cannot go on its way for months or years pretending there are no problems within the organization and then expect support for new taxes and higher budgets to meet heretofore unpublicized needs. Educators should, by all means, emphasize the positive, especially in an age

when there seems to be growing disenchantment with public education, but they also should build a foundation for future public support by willingly discussing and even pointing out problem areas.

Assuming that, however small a system, there is someone with interest in and commitment to using the mass media as channels of communication with the public, there are certain techniques which then will be helpful. Among them are the following:

1. Learn the deadlines of local media. For weekly newspapers, this may be a given day of the week. For daily newspapers, this will be one or more hours of each day. For radio stations, there may be a number of deadlines each day, perhaps only a few minutes before each local newscast. For those systems with access to television stations, daily deadlines may be several hours before each major local newscast, because of the time needed to process film or edit video tape. Observe these deadlines. Have material to media as far in advance of the deadlines as possible. If you wish to talk with busy editors or reporters, a meeting well before or after each day's deadlines is desirable.

2. If the school system plans to issue news releases, be sure that these are legible and neat. If at all possible, type them on electric machines with film ribbons. If several copies of a certain release are desired, duplicate them on a good quality dry copier using non-coated paper (such as a Xerox machine) or duplicate them on an offset or mimeograph machine. Do not use, if possible, copy machines which need coated paper. This paper is difficult for an editor to mark up with a pencil. If a mimeograph machine is used, be sure the machine regularly is cleaned and refilled with ink. If any other method of duplicating is available, do not use a spirit machine (such as Ditto brand), which makes copies from carbon-backed masters. Do not send carbon copies unless a high quality carbon paper and electric typewriter are used, and then only after checking in advance with the media. Never send carbon copies typed on onionskin paper; this tends to tear under the weight of an editing pencil. Be aware of the good or bad impression that legible or illegible releases make for your school system. Do not, however, spend excessive sums of money on elaborate news release letterheads. Editors may ask why this money is not spent to meet the needs of students in a school district.

3. Alert media representatives in advance to scheduled events. Do so, if possible, at least two weeks ahead of time; this will permit advance as well as follow-up stories.

4. If providing information on an event which already has occurred, get the information to the media in the shortest possible time. The cliché that "nothing is as stale as yesterday's news" is based on the fact that newsmen fight a continuing battle to keep the public informed about the latest news. In the case of daily newspapers and broadcasts media, the administrator with public information responsibilities probably should telephone follow-up stories

to editors or reporters. They may wish to rewrite the information given them or, in the case of radio stations, to tape record the administrator's report for later play-back on a newscast, thus giving the station a new voice and a sense of immediacy in covering local news. Never lamely bring or call in a story that is several days old.

5. The school information officer should let working relationships and individual circumstances determine whether he/she concentrates on writing releases or on providing suggestions for journalists to develop into stories. An administrator with public information responsibilities in a small town may need to furnish as much written material as possible to understaffed media. The opposite may be true in urban or suburban areas. In connection with school closings because of snow and similar stories, speed is essential and telephone or other personal contacts always should be made.

6. Public information officers can help journalists cover school board meetings by providing printed agendas in advance of scheduled meetings and by providing background information on issues to be considered. It also is helpful to follow up with reporters covering board meetings to see if they need help in interpreting and understanding what they have seen and heard. Here again, openness is the best policy; the information officer should resist the temptation to distort news coverage by giving only the organization's "official line" on any story.

7. The administrator with public information responsibilities should realize that communicating with the public and developing good public relations are not one-man jobs. To assume so is to attempt the impossible. Public information/relations is a system-wide responsibility. The information officer should hold inservice programs and provide other help so that teachers, principals, and other administrators can function, when needed, as persons who can communicate via the mass media with the public about the schools.

In written or verbal communication with media representatives, educators should avoid jargon as much as possible. Educators are so immersed in jargon that it takes a conscious effort to substitute plain language for educationalese. It also takes some thought in order to translate terms which we sometimes glibly toss around into something meaningful to the layman. Such phrases as "individually prescribed instruction," "non-graded classrooms," the "open learning concept," and the whole new vocabulary fostered by federal aid to education can be meaningless to the non-educator and to many educators. Clarity of thought is essential before educators can communicate with journalists and the public. Public information officers and others must think through the message they wish to communicate and then phrase it so as to produce the greatest possible understanding. When jargon is used, the information officer should always be ready to clarify its meaning. Even such a common term as "inservice" may mean only "teachers meetings" to the informed public and nothing to those not familiar with education jargon. Avoidance or at least

definition of jargon should be one of the major skills cultivated by the information officer.

There has been little said in this article about how to write news releases for the mass media, and purposefully so. Good public information programs can be developed by educators who know little or nothing about news writing. If there is interest in and commitment to communicating with the public through the mass media, educators will find that simply approaching journalists with information, inviting them to press conferences, or helping them understand what is happening at a board meeting will work wonders in improving press coverage. Lack of writing experience and/or ability should not be a crutch that educators use to avoid public information efforts.

For the educator who wishes to sharpen his news writing skills, however, a textbook used in college reporting classes will be helpful. Analytical reading, listening, and viewing of newspaper and broadcast stories will be helpful, with emphasis not on what is communicated but how. Local editors and reporters often will be glad to critique educators' preliminary attempts at news releases. Those administrators who have the time no doubt will benefit from enrolling in journalism classes. Never mind that these are at the sophomore or junior levels in college; the content will be helpful. Seminars, workshops, or short courses offered by the National School Public Relations Association, the Tennessee School Boards Association, and the Tennessee Education Association also will be useful.

The most important aspect to developing a school system public information program is that the system's leaders have a commitment to such a program. If commitment is present, the other elements will follow.

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If language is not correct, then what is said is not meant. If what is said is not meant, then what ought to be done remains undone. If this remains undone, then morals and art deteriorate. If morals and art deteriorate, justice will go astray. If justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence, there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. That matters above everything.

Confucius
About 500 B. C.

PARENT-PRINCIPAL CONFERENCES: THE
PRINCIPAL OF THE THING

by
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"I want to talk with the principal. No, I do not want to talk with anybody else. I want to see the principal." This parental request is almost a daily occurrence in a majority of schools. Even though this request leads to an unscheduled and usually unplanned conference, it is a very important part of the principal's day. He must be able to deal with such situations as they occur.

The purpose of the visit might be for a number of reasons. It might involve a complaint or it might be a simple request for information. In any event, if it is important to the parent, it should be important to the principal. Many difficulties and misunderstandings can be resolved through constructive parent-principal conferences.

The effective school principal encourages and coordinates conferences with parents and briefs faculty members on the art of preparing and planning conferences. Sometimes a parent asks a question which requires no more than a simple, polite answer.

Principals need occasionally to "run interference" for their teachers. When this happens, the principal needs sufficient information from which to make wise decisions based on sound judgment. If the parent has a complaint against a teacher, the teacher may need to be present at the conference. The

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complaint might involve a disciplinary action, homework assignment or the personal relationship between the teacher and the child. In any case, the principal should weigh every side of the situation before making judgments which might be difficult to support with facts.

One of the greatest challenges offered by parent-principal conferences is to overcome the prejudice and misconceptions brought to the school by the parent. Historically, such meetings between the parent and the principal have been conducted generally at the request of the school; and they have frequently signaled that the student whose parents had been summoned was in serious trouble or that he had at least fallen from the good graces of school personnel. The parent often comes with grave misgivings to a school where he or she might also have had difficulty or at least had heard accounts that are unfavorable. In many cases, the parents' knowledge of the principal is limited to what has been said by a child. The parent who has been invited to the school under such conditions will likely be defensive and anxious, but the parent who has braved these conditions to request the conference himself might come to the school angry and belligerent.

The responsibility of the principal is to take whatever measures are necessary to insure a positive atmosphere and to secure desirable results. If the conference is to be conducted on a professional level, the principal must conduct himself in a professional manner.

If the conference is scheduled, the principal must know as much as possible about the situation which made the conference necessary in the first place. Appropriate planning enables the principal to be aware of the situation and to help with suggestions to solve the problem.

The initial impression which the parent has of the school is important. A clean, attractive building is a good beginning. A friendly, attractive receptionist is also extremely helpful. If parents must wait, they should be made as comfortable as possible.

In conducting the conference, the principal should be sure that the parent has an opportunity to express his opinions and feelings. Uncomplimentary remarks should be avoided and disagreements should be handled calmly and carefully. Honesty, fairness, objectivity and tact should be displayed if the parent is to build respect for the principal.

Principals should avoid educational jargon in talking with parents. Terms which are familiar to the principal sometimes have no meaning to parents. Communication is very important if the conference is to be successful.

Parents may be categorized in many ways. The worried parent is concerned about problems of his own and is convinced that his child is in serious trouble. The shy parent would rather be almost anywhere else, and it is almost

impossible to engage him in meaningful conversation. The egotistical parent is clever and confident. He attempts to take charge of the meeting. The emotional parent might be tense and anxious. He might not be able to converse in a rational manner or he might encounter difficulty in controlling himself. The critical parent always has an expert opinion on any educational matter. He knows how to deal with his child and expects the principal to abide by his directives.

It is sometimes necessary and desirable for parent-principal conferences to be held in the home. Some parents refuse to visit the school and if a serious problem necessitating a conference develops, the principal should attempt a home visit.

The effective principal recognizes his responsibilities in participating in a successful conference. He is able to listen with interest, analyze information, determine the nature of conflicts, discuss problems without engaging in arguments, use concise grammar, and interpret the school's program to the parent. If these things are done, we perhaps will no longer hear, "It isn't school that we hate so much; it's just the principal of the thing."

The importance of information about how schools serve the needs of pupils rests partly on the close relationship between education and the principles of democratic government. Education can be understood only in the context of this relationship.

In a sense, the basic purpose of our education system is to implement the freedoms set forth in the Bill of Rights. Those freedoms can be exercised effectively or responsibly only by people who have the knowledge, skills, and judgments they need to comprehend the changing opportunities and responsibilities which characterize the modern world. People are free to do only what they know how to do. They are free to apply only knowledge they have acquired, to use only those skills they have mastered, to apply only those ideas they have explored, to accept only those responsibilities they can recognize. Ignorance limits freedom and capacity to use it responsibly.

Gordon McCloskey
Education and Public Understanding
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SCHOOL BOARD-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

Dr. Jack Owenby

Executive Director

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The American experiment of local lay control of public education is unique to the world. It has been likened to a great mosaic picture composed of thousands of separate pieces. These separate pieces, developed in the local community and placed properly into relationship with all other local systems, go together to make up this unique American public education experiment.

Nowhere is the strength or weakness of the "American Education System" more evident than in the arena of school board-community relations. Although no significant change has been made in America's basic commitment to local lay control and universal education of its populace, changes have occurred in the way local control is exercised. Whereas, prior to the 1960's local school boards served a basically satisfied public, today these same boards are seeking to serve an increasingly diverse and aroused community. The ground rules for school boards have changed. Farsighted local boards are moving from yesterday's operational model to new methods that recognize their changing role in the dynamic nature of what is termed public education in our society.

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Many school boards, until recent years, were viewed by the public as operating our school systems in a low key, autonomic, and isolated manner. Minimum, if any, local community support or public relations effort was attempted, except in times of crises or citizen revolt; that is, until various external influences began to encroach on the board's right and ability to govern the systems as they saw fit. Such outside influences as increased federal funding, with accompanying compliance guidelines, state and federal laws and court decisions; increasingly stringent state rules and regulations; militant professional organizations and their demands for collective bargaining rights; citizen advisory groups; and sex/racial discrimination laws have significantly narrowed and/or modified the decision making process for local board members and administrators. One could make a case for or against these factors as to their positive or negative influence on improving educational opportunities for America's youth. However, it is certain that these pressures have had a major impact in the awakening of school board members to their role in developing school board policy consistent and in conjunction with the educational and societal wants, desires, and needs of the community as a whole. Through the recent period of trial and society-shaking experience, the local lay control concept, though battered and bruised by the impact of resulting change, has emerged as a stronger and more viable concept of public education for America.

School boards are not only adapting to these changes and influences but are working toward becoming serious students of their communities and socioeconomic and political systems in order to react in a more sensitive nature to their role as educational policy makers. They are viewing education not in terms of an isolated and separate part of society, but as an integral and inseparable ingredient in the formula for citizen and community involvement for total life-long educational and cultural progress.

The era is long gone in which school boards could operate in isolation from the community, as is the era of the paternal school board who only knew what was best for the children, teachers, and community. American education has become too big and expensive, too involved in the social issues, and too important to everyone's future to accept decisions without questions. The responsibility to answer these questions belongs to the school board through a continual effective and positive school board-community relations effort. Good communication leads to understanding, which in turn leads to support of leadership goals and objectives.

Many school boards operate without written policies regarding communication with the community. Administrators and staff are left to do whatever they deem necessary and expedient to inform the public about the schools. Such programs, or lack of them, are exposed in times of crises and their efforts can often be disastrous to a community's understanding of their schools. Although no educational program, good or bad, can function effectively without management backing, good administration requires established board policy. Effective

school board policies provide direction and a basis for decision making, furnish security to decision makers, and compel positive action.

The dire need for a policy in the area of school-community relations should be clear. The average citizen has only the vaguest notion of how the education system works, its strengths, its weaknesses, and what it is doing--how and why. The following principles are proposed as necessary ingredients for a statement of board policy regarding effective school-community relations.

1. The school board must accept full responsibility for keeping the public informed about the operation of their schools. The board seeks ways to involve citizens in the work of the schools and to stimulate understanding on the part of the community.

2. The school board welcomes and encourages the active participation and support of all citizens in striving for the highest excellence in their schools.

3. The school board will utilize all methods available to ascertain public attitudes toward school operations with consideration given toward board policy development.

4. The school board-community relations program is an intrinsic part of the school operational procedure. It is honest in intent and execution, as comprehensive as possible, and uses all available media.

5. The school board recognizes the importance of keeping all employees fully informed of school policies to enable them to interpret school programs to the public.

6. All school board deliberations and decisions will be made in public within the state laws governing public bodies.

7. The school board-community relations program is a responsibility of the chief school administrator under whose direction the program functions within the school board policies adopted.

Awareness on the part of the school board and development of appropriate policies regarding school board-community relations will not in themselves guarantee school systems an ongoing, up-to-date, and far-reaching PR program. However, it will provide a policy foundation from which sound decisions can be made.

Every community needs to ask these questions:

- Does it have first-rate people on its school board, and are they broadly representative of the community?
- Does the board have open lines of communication to the school administration, to the teachers and to the entire community?
- Is it getting the information it needs to make responsible decisions, both short- and long-range?
- Does it have effective liaison with allied community programs: with the departments of health and welfare, with housing, private industry, transportation and total city planning?
- Is it doing what a board should do--setting the policy for a strong administrator responsible to it--or is it wasting its time by dabbling in administrative details?

If you get an affirmative answer to all these questions, you're likely to have a first-rate public school system. If not, then your work is cut out for you.

John W. Gardner

TEACHERS CONTRIBUTE TO SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

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The instructional program is the major focus of the school-community relations. The purpose of a school is to provide instruction for its clients, so what happens with the instructional program is going to establish the image of the school and maintain this image in a lasting way. All of us remember some things about the different schools we have attended. This does not necessarily mean we remember every activity that took place in school, but some experiences did make such an impression on us that we will remember them for a long time. As parents, we remember the contacts we have had with the school regarding our own children's experiences. The experiences we recall as students may or may not coincide with experiences of our children. Adults who do not have children in school but have relatives or neighbors with children who attend school are quick to judge the present day school experiences. These experiences are based upon the student's reaction and may seem totally different to the experiences these adults encountered in school. Whether we are students, parents, or others, we respond to and relate to school from an instructional point of view.

The instructional program is a reflection of many different sources. The community, economics, a board of education, students, parents, a principal, and teachers all influence the instructional program. However, try as we may, we cannot get away from the fact that the teacher is the key person

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responsible for the instructional program. When we hear the word "instruction" we immediately visualize a teacher-student relationship. The importance of a good relationship between a teacher and a student cannot be underestimated. It ultimately becomes the relationship between the teacher and the community. Consequently, it is apparent that each teacher has the greatest opportunity to create good public relations with the community by the quality of the instructional program which she provides.

Approximately one out of every four persons is of school age (between five and seventeen years of age). Therefore, teachers come into daily contact with a large segment of our population. Through this contact with students a relationship is established with parents, which is another important segment of the population. When this contact is made, dissemination to the remainder of the population becomes inevitable. People believe and interpret what is passed on to them by their children. The easiest topic for an adult to discuss with a child is school, and many people readily accept the child's version of school and what takes place in school. Beginning with the child the "grapevine" is activated and starts to work. Many of us may be skeptical of what we read as a quote from an unknown person, but we believe what we hear through the "grapevine." We believe what is told to us by someone we know.

A mother, who was very proud of her one and only son, eager to see him as he came home from school, always asked, "Johnny, what did you do at school today?" His reply was always the same. "Nothin'." As a defense, teachers may say that Johnny was eager to eat, to watch television, to relax after a hard day at school, or just didn't want to re-hash the day's experiences. At any rate, the mother may have perceived that her son was really doing "nothing" at school. She might further believe this if she herself had done very little at school. Out of concern for her own child, the mother will begin to talk to neighbors, friends, or relatives. Before long the "grapevine" has carried the news that all students are doing "nothing" in school. The responsibility for "grapevine" news is on the teacher and the instructional program which she provides. It is up to the teacher to provide instruction that will excite students and make them feel they are doing more than "nothing" at school. The "grapevine" can serve a positive purpose! When a teacher radiates with exciting learning experiences for the students, the word is soon spread throughout the community.

Further substantiation of the teacher's important role in community relations is evident in the much related story of the first grader entering school for the first time. His mother had talked with him about the golden opportunity of going to school. Older brothers and sisters who went to school seemed to enjoy the many activities, so young Jimmy eagerly awaited the day he was to start to school. Finally, the beautiful August day came. Jimmy awakened that morning on his own, dressed very carefully, ate a hearty breakfast, and after final preparations eagerly waited for the bus to arrive to take him to school. Jimmy was the youngest of four children and his mother was

lonesome for him during his first day at school. As the day passed, she anxiously anticipated his return from school. When he did arrive, she greeted him with the usual mother question. "How did you like school?" With his head drooped, Jimmy said, "Mama, I ain't going back to that school tomorrow." Seeing his look of disappointment, she quickly asked, "Why aren't you going to school tomorrow?" He replied, "I can't read and write, and that teacher won't let me talk; so there's no reason for me to go to school anyway." Jimmy's rejection, multiplied many days of each school year, multiplied many years, soon creates an image of a school that is not relative to the individual student. Here again, the teacher holds the key to the status of the school within the community.

An analysis of published school budgets will indicate that approximately 70 percent of the budgets' current operating expenses go for instructional costs. A majority of these instructional costs are teachers' salaries and the very basic materials necessary for teaching. An individual's tax or tuition money has an amount earmarked for instructional purposes, automatically. There is certainly no argument that this is where the money belongs. In an era of accountability, the burden of providing a dollar's worth of service for a dollar's cost is upon the total instructional program. However, the teacher is in the limelight when citizens consider where they are putting their tax dollar. They expect this dollar's worth of service. They expect it from the teacher. A superintendent, building principal, and other school administrator can create good will and public understanding by addressing meetings and writing articles about their respective instructional institutions; but, teachers face students on a daily basis. When a student does not understand his role or purpose for the daily activities, then negative reactions to schools can flourish. The day-to-day contact between the teacher and the student creates the image of the school and makes clear the purposes and relevancies of the school for the student. The taxpayer may then feel that the dollar's cost is providing a dollar's worth of service.

Through scheduled conferences, attending parent-teacher meetings, and participating in community activities, teachers come face-to-face with parents who constitute a large segment of our population. These contacts can be very positive or at the same time equally as negative. It depends on the teacher's ability to constantly and consistently be "on her toes" to maintain positive contacts. This is a difficult task and a tremendous responsibility for the teacher.

Report cards or other means for evaluating students' work is another contact that is universally made by teachers with parents. Parents perceive that teachers give grades. They fail to understand that students earn grades. One of the most difficult things for teachers to understand is that report cards are for parents--not students, not teachers, not administrators. The only reason report cards exist is for parents. More discussion between parents and teachers is over grades than any other single school related topic. There

is a very positive reason for this. Teachers are accountable for the evaluation of the child's work and parents are interested about the end result of their child's experiences. Needless to say, the report card contact between parents and teachers is an important link in school-community relations.

A present day criticism of schools is that sufficient instruction in the "basics" is not provided. The "basics" (arithmetic, grammar, spelling, and reading) are areas that parents themselves either feel that they need now, or needed and did not receive when they were students. In addition to instruction in these basics, schools are expected to stand up for certain values which are felt to be important in daily life. Parents who love and feel accountable for their children certainly will be compelled to communicate with the person they hold responsible for teaching these necessary basics and these values which assist in molding their children's lives. Teachers who recognize and understand parents' need for communication can create a positive community relationship by using patience and tact in dealing with parents on these subjects. Teachers are the only persons with such an opportunity and responsibility. Teachers are in an immensely strategic position to enhance school-community relations.

Instruction and Curriculum Must be Understood

As stated above, teachers are the main contributory to school-community relations because of their close contact with the student and through the instructional program. It is most vital, in order for schools to maintain public confidence, that teachers recognize the necessity for explaining what they are doing and why they are doing it. The teacher's position is no longer the unquestioned authority with undisputed word and power. Parents want to understand the instructional program and curriculum offerings. They expect this explanation to come from the teachers--from those who are doing it. If satisfactory explanation is not received from the teacher, it is then and only then that the parent goes to the administrator, the building principal or even the superintendent. Regardless of what may be published or stated by the superintendent or other administrators, the main source of information is the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher interprets and demonstrates the instructional program.

Educators have attempted to devise and promote programs to meet increasing needs of present day students. The explosion of knowledge and technology and urbanization of today's society has brought about a need for change. Such change has not always been communicated through the teaching ranks to the public. For example, many parents do not understand the reason and rationale for "modern math." It is so different from the mathematics they experienced while they were in school. No single instructional discipline has escaped questioning by the public. Many science programs are being questioned

and the varied approaches to teaching reading have caused confusion among today's adults. Some of the activities provided in social studies curriculum have been misunderstood. A dedicated committed teacher can interpret the curriculum to the adults of the community, in addition to analyzing the curriculum's effectiveness with students.

Curriculum and instruction must be understood not only by parents, but certainly by the teachers who provide the explanations to the parents. Programs cannot be placed in particular schools by administrators without the teachers having a full understanding of the program and its objectives. In order to communicate properly concerning the program, each teacher must be fully oriented into the program. A teacher that remotely shows a lack of knowledge of a particular program can tear down any previous school-community relationship that has been established. It is an absolute must for curriculum and instruction to be understood by the teacher, by students, and by parents.

Positive Effects Can be Achieved by the Teachers

Positive relationships between the school and the community can be enhanced by the teacher. Once this positive image has been established, then it is difficult to break it down. In other words, it doesn't matter to a parent, who has a positive image of a school which his child attends, what he may read or hear. Negative news seems to be far removed from the school which his child attends. This is only true with schools that experience local input into the programs. Parent involvement is a plus positive factor for any school. School systems may have public relations directors and use many approaches to produce a positive image about their institutional organization, but in most cases the people who really count will know the results of the school program. This is not to say that public information oriented administrators do not enhance the programs through these various means. It is to say, however, that community involvement and receptive teachers can create the positive effects that are needed.

Since a great deal of a teacher's responsibility is to improve school-community relations, it is suggested that training in school-community relations should be a requirement for a teacher's certificate. This requirement should not supplant or replace the disciplines and the methods courses which are presently required for a teacher's certificate. A strong school-community relationship results in a higher prestige and salary status for the teacher; thus, positive effects from a good school-community relationship benefits both the teacher and the community.

Education can be improved in many ways by encouraging a strong teacher-community relations approach. If decisions concerning education are made far removed from the place of action, then teachers would probably

succumb to a "cook book" approach to all instructional programs; and educators would attempt to devise a blueprint that would force all students to fit into a pattern. Although some people will argue for standards, it is highly unlikely that all students have the same strengths and weaknesses; and they should not be treated as if they possess identical qualities and abilities. Teachers who are able to use a personalized approach in instruction are better able to cement strong ties with the student, the student's parents, and ultimately, the community.

Administrators who understand the importance of the teacher in a good school-community relationship take a different approach to securing teachers. Many administrators will quickly say, "If you give me a good teacher, then I won't have any problems." A school is only as good as its teachers. Administrators who really care about the quality of instruction will attempt to secure well trained teachers and thereby insure a very positive school-community relationship. Good teachers are the real strength in education, both public and private throughout our country. Without good teachers, it would be impossible to establish the communication that exists in our present day educational systems and communities. Teachers not only contribute to school-community relations, they are the heart of it!!!

* * *

"People is all everything is, all it has ever been, all it can ever be."

William Saroyan

RESEARCH-ORIENTED SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

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"Too much attention has been focused on the sideshows--athletics, baton-twirling, extracurricular activities, social events--and too little on the show in the main tent [1]."

The above quotation is neither limited to nor isolated in educational literature. It represents a feeling, an attitude expressed in many ways by many critics of public education. Moreover, it represents a clear misunderstanding that some people have of modern education, its objectives, and its methods [2]. And still further, it is a clear signal that those educators who can do something to bring about understanding had better do it now.

There are problems in public education. It is a major enterprise of a progressive nation; and, as such, it is open to the socio-economic fluctuations which beset any similar national endeavor. Although the average citizen may not have the foggiest notion regarding the causes or solutions to these problems, he is not unaware of their existence. In fact, all too often John Q. Public is well ahead of the professional educator in acknowledging that serious problems exist in the network of schools funded out of the tax dollar.

So what does this mean for the school administrator who is busy reacting on a daily basis to his own set of problems--teacher placement, student discipline, transportation, scheduling, and so on? For responsible educators it means taking a sensitive, keen, hard look at what the schools are doing to understand themselves and their environment. A distinguishing mark for the effective administrator in the school-community circumstance is that he knows where he is, where he wants to go, and how he can get there [3]. Among other

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things, it means instituting some type of data collection system, "research" if you will.

The Role of Research

The very word "research" literally scares many an administrator right out of his swivel chair. He long ago learned to cope with or at least be comfortable with such terms as "budget," "curriculum," and "ADA." But research? That's different. It is a monster of the vocabulary; something to be feared and shunned. What he needs to do is overcome his mental disposition and simply decide to ask of himself and his organization "what's our problem?"

One of the agonizing weaknesses in school-community relations is the misplaced emphasis on the dissemination of information. Indeed, "informing" is a fundamental tenet of democracy, and it is extremely important in school-community communication [4]. Basic to the dissemination task, however, is the task of collecting data--finding out what the facts really are, determining opinions and attitudes, and examining what is being accomplished elsewhere under similar conditions. Fact-finding is the very foundation of effective school-community relations [5]. It is difficult, if not impossible, to gain understanding of a situation in the absence of facts or what appears to be factual. The terms "facts" and "factual" should not ignite ill-kept prejudices; they refer here not only to that which is commonly held as being "true" but also to opinions and attitudes which often surface as facts. It may or may not be a "fact" that students learn more in an "open" classroom, but it surely is a fact that some citizens believe that students do not learn as well as in the conventional classroom setting.

Research Starts With Listening

How does an administrator go about the task of getting to the facts?

Honest assessment of the school's circumstance begins with listening. The PR literature calls it "feedback." In more candid terms, it means taking one's head out of the sand and opening one's ears (as well as eyes) to what is being said by students, teachers, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, parents, businessmen, and the whole of the citizenry. It means providing these publics with opportunities to express themselves either formally or in a casual way. It means evaluating "input" according to educational needs and desires. It means abandoning the fear of criticism and inviting people to say what they believe [6]. It means marshalling input (or its sources) by setting up and implementing a program of information [7].

Systematic Research Efforts

Researching the school-community relationship requires more than listening, however. It requires the maintenance of a systematic effort to collect information from many sources, in particular from students, teachers, and parents.

In a given school unit, every member of the administrative and instructional staffs ought to know approximately how many students are enrolled; how many are freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors; what the average class size is; the areas of the school district from whence the students come; the average reading level; and the list can go on and on. It reasons that school personnel cannot accurately inform the publics they serve if they do not have a reasonably good fact-bank upon which to rely. Obtaining this information requires a search of individual and class records, as well as many other school documents, and it means compiling the information in such a manner as to be easily accessed when needed [8].

The fact-file should also have pertinent information with regard to instructional and non-instructional personnel: the number of faculty and staff in a given school unit; their average age, average salary; the number with bachelor's and advanced degrees; average years teaching experience; and again the list is endless.

The whole idea in this fact collection effort is that the school needs to know itself thoroughly if it is to succeed in helping those on the outside know and understand the school. Before we ask "how do others see us?" we should ask and answer "how do we see ourselves?"

Studying the Community

A logical step following institutional self-study is the effort to study the community. Understanding the community makes it possible for the school staff to plan intelligently and takes much of the guesswork out of action programs [9]. The school needs to know the expectations of the community with regard to education; the identity of the decision-makers in the community; the long-range and immediate problems which exist; the media which are most and least reliable; the changes which are occurring in employment, population, and life styles; and the types and numbers of social and civic organizations that have expressed concerns for public education.

Research Methods

How do you go about getting information about your community? More

specifically, how does the principal of a small school unit obtain such information when his staff and time are quite limited?

One simple method is for the principal (or central office staff member in a system-wide setting) to make a written sociological inventory of the community, writing down as many questions as can be thought of and then providing the answers on the basis of personal and staff experience. The danger in this subjective analysis is that the answers will not provide enough gaps; the analyst may feel compelled to answer all questions immediately with no extension to the experiences and opinions of others. This compulsion should be overcome immediately. The gaps are important. They give direction to where you need to go for information. Obviously, utilizing as many points of view as possible and involving more than just a few people are helpful techniques.

Another possible approach is the development of some means for measuring community attitudes and opinions. The objective is to find out how people think and feel about their schools and what should be done to increase their understanding, support, and participation [10]. In its highest form, this type of research is extremely technical. The level to which it is utilized by the school administrator would necessarily be controlled by his staff resources.

Opinion research may take several forms:

1. forums and conferences,
2. advisory committees,
3. telephone surveys,
4. consumer panels,
5. questionnaires, and
6. interviews and home visits [11].

Before any of the above are undertaken, however, certain questions should be answered by school personnel:

1. Exactly what is it that needs to be studied?
2. What appears to be the best method for obtaining the information?
3. What resources (money, time, personnel) are required?
4. Who is best qualified to carry on this research?
5. What will we do with the information once we have it? [12]

Research Leadership

Administrative leadership is basic to any aspect of successful communication, and certainly this truism applies to the matter of research-based school-community relations. Effective leadership implies a team effort. The stance taken by the Board of Education with respect to a school-community relations policy is fundamental to the whole effort. As the legal representative

of the electorate, the Board sets policy. It determines through policy the extent to which public opinion is sought and utilized. It provides the foundation for administrative organization [13].

The superintendent has overall responsibility for planning, directing, and coordinating the research effort. In small school systems, the superintendent fulfills these functions himself. In larger systems, considerable responsibility and authority may be delegated to members of the central staff. Whatever the administrative organization, it is important that the research program be integrated with the educational services which the system provides. Otherwise, the research will become self-serving and will have little or no influence on improving the educational program itself [14].

In most school systems, the principal of the individual school unit will play a vital role in the research effort. Each principal and his faculty are close to the grass roots of public opinion. Finding out how parents and other patrons feel about their schools, and determining what they actually know or believe as facts, is a significant task in the work of the school principal. The matter of "finding out" cannot be achieved to the exclusion of the local school unit. The risk of error would be too great, the consequences too traumatic.

In sum, the achievement of a successful research-based school-community relations program is dependent on the systematic efforts of the Board of Education, the superintendent, and the principals of the various school units within the system. This tripartite organization will eventually determine the scope and quality of the research as well as the ultimate direction of the entire school-community relations program.

* * *

"Methodical, systematic research is the foundation of effective public relations."

Scott M. Cutlip and
Allen H. Center

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OBTAINING AND PRESERVING COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

by
Dr. Robin L. Pierce
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The key words in obtaining and preserving community support are information and honesty. The community must be kept informed about the schools if they are to support them. Surprisingly, this is not easy to do. Recent evidence points out that the public is relatively uninformed.

In addition to keeping the public informed, we must be honest with them. Nothing will destroy community support any faster than for a board of education or superintendent to be dishonest or use devious means in making decisions.

How, then, can we inform the community and insure the honesty of school systems? First of all, the board of education (representing the people) must provide proper leadership.

The public schools literally belong to the people Schools today represent one of the nation's great achievements. Their future growth and development depend upon continued public understanding and support. The local school board, representing the people, must lead the way in assuring public confidence and trust in schools [1].

It is imperative that school boards earn and retain public trust and confidence. They must act for the people as they strive to represent the entire

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community in providing leadership that will best serve the educational needs of all children.

The superintendent as the chief executive officer of the system plays an important role also. He should keep his board of education informed about all pertinent school matters and act within the policies established by the board.

Keeping the school board intimately informed regarding the ongoing affairs of the school system, helping the board perceive the dimensions of problems, giving the board expert council and advice, initiating consideration and discussion of policy matters, and leading the board in policy development and refinement are important responsibilities of the superintendent [2].

The superintendent should also be deeply concerned with the problem of how best to involve the community in the schools. Many people subscribe to the point of view that the P.T.A. is one excellent avenue to achieve this. "The best example of an existing medium of communication through which parents can work to change and improve schools is the P.T.A. [3]"

The P.T.A. can and should be an integral part of the school system. Educators cannot take for granted that the P.T.A. members are well informed about their schools. Stough espoused the same when he said, "One of the biggest problems in education is that parents can't find an educator with whom they can talk [4]."

The author is cognizant that public schools have "tolerated" parent involvement in the past. However, today's parents are vitally concerned about their schools, and the school system that develops positive ways to involve parents will be wise.

A school is good when it moves away from bureaucratic paternalism and toward increased community participation In the best arrangements this means that there are established channels through which parents can express grievances against the school and participate in its functioning [5].

Another important aspect of obtaining and preserving community support involves the staff. The employment and retention of a competent and professional staff is imperative. In the author's twelve years as an administrator in this state, more than seventy-five percent of the irate parents dealt with were parents who were upset by a teacher. These situations could have been avoided many times had the teacher been more professional, more knowledgeable, or more tactful.

A good staff can create public support and confidence that is genuine and positive. A mediocre or negative staff can destroy good community relations

very quickly. If children feel comfortable about school and make satisfactory progress, they can convey this message to their parents; unfortunately, the reverse is also true. The professional staff is the only group of people who can alter this situation at the building level.

Whether we like it or not, everyone engaged in public education is a public relations person. The image we portray to the community is highly related to the amount of public support we can expect.

Despite the real or imagined shortcomings of public relations efforts, we maintain that they are now needed more than ever before. Because of the apparent lack of confidence in institutions everywhere, it is necessary that education . . . find ways to inform the public [6].

This can best be done at the local level. The board of education, administrative and professional staff are a vital part of the community. Their interpersonal relationships and day-to-day contact with the community are excellent vehicles to inform the public.

The final topic for consideration in this article is the relationship to the news media and more specifically the press. The importance of this relationship cannot be overemphasized. "Today's school board desperately needs an effective pipeline to the community, and the best and most efficient one we have available is the local press [7]."

The news media must have complete confidence in the board of education and the professional staff and a feeling of mutual respect must be present if an effective relationship is to be maintained. The press can be the best friend or the worst enemy the schools can have. "It can rally public opinion in your favor or turn it against you at the drop of an adjective. It can turn the most capable and efficient board of education into a pack of bumbling, incompetent clods--or seem to [8]." My thesis is simply this: In order to obtain and preserve community support, a school system must keep the community informed in as many ways as possible. In addition the system must be honest and insure that a feeling of mutual trust exists.

I am cognizant that there are other ways than those discussed in this article to accomplish that objective. However, these are essential in establishing a relationship with the community that will include courtesy, cooperation, consideration, and mutual respect.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS THROUGH CAREER EDUCATION

by

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Maryville City Schools

A school's public relations often has little to do with the job description of a public relations specialist.

Although the specialist carries out such important functions as distributing school news to the media and publishing newsletters to teachers and parents, far more lasting impressions about the school are created by personal contacts between school personnel and people in the community. It is important that teachers, principals, secretaries, and even janitors realize that they are all part of the school's public image.

In the Maryville City school system, a unique program of career education in the elementary schools is an important link in the public relations chain. The program is presently carried out by three part-time "associate coordinators," one in each elementary school.

The aim of the program is to increase pupil awareness of career opportunities in the community. Elementary-age children are, of course, not ready for a job-training program; so the emphasis is on career awareness.

The associate coordinator provides practical help when a classroom teacher wishes to relate a unit of study to the "world of work." For example, in a unit on transportation, the career ed person might be asked by the teacher to invite speakers from the airlines and to follow this up with arrangements for a field trip to the airport.

A parent survey is made at the beginning of each school year in an effort to get parent volunteers to come to the classroom and tell about their jobs. One fourth grade class recently was visited by a pupil's father, an

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airline steward, in preparation for their trip to the airport. Another parent who demonstrated his job skills was a hotel chef who prepared a gourmet chicken dish and decorated cakes for his son's first grade class while they were studying the five senses.

Visitors from the health career field are often invited to the schools. Several local physicians as well as technicians from Blount Memorial Hospital have discussed their jobs and the training required for each.

"Community Helpers" is a favorite unit for kindergarten and primary-age children. Garbage workers, policemen, firemen, and postmen are invited to talk about their jobs. A follow-up visit is often made by the class to the Maryville Municipal Building or the Post Office. Funds are provided in the career education budget for bus transportation as needed.

The career education coordinator is usually the person who contacts resource speakers and places of business or industry that classes wish to visit. She often accompanies groups on their trips. She writes thank-you letters following each visit or speaker. It should be obvious that many people in the community will receive an impression of the school from her personality and efficiency.

Each career ed person also acts as a contact to the school system's public relations specialist with news of special units or activities. In this way the media can be informed of newsworthy classroom happenings, and such news can also be published in the school system's newsletters.

In addition to outside speakers and field trips, in-class activities may be related to career education. Such projects as sewing, carpentry, painting, and cooking are undertaken by groups of students under the supervision of the classroom teacher and career education coordinator. A most important conclusion reached by the children is that many phases of work are needed and related to produce a finished product. The dignity and importance of all types of work are stressed.

The program has evolved into its present form from ambitious beginnings. In 1972 a grant from the Appalachian Educational Cooperative and the Tennessee Vocational Education Board provided for three full-time professional career coordinators and three aides in the system. As so often happens, the funds were curtailed after the first year and the local board of education assumed the cost of the program. In the second year of its operation the program was carried out by one full-time coordinator and three aides, and for the past two years there have been only the three part-time associate coordinators.

In spite of these budget cut-backs, the program has been very successfully continued by non-professional persons with the help of the supervisor of instruction. It is felt by teachers and administrators alike that the career

education program is an asset not only to the elementary curriculum but also to the Maryville City Schools' public relations.

Career Education is responsible for bringing community people into the school and school children into the community in a way no other program can match.

Citizens support or fail to support school programs not so much because of the merits of the individual programs as because of a general feeling of trust or faith in the system. It is this feeling that the board must encourage. It must not let any group, even a group which is eventually dissatisfied with the decision, feel that it was dealt with in an arbitrary or cavalier manner.

Quoted by Robert E. Agger
and Marshall N. Goldstein in
Who Will Rule the Schools: A
Cultural Class Crisis

1971

THE NEED FOR GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by
Walter Warren Shanks, Superintendent
Putnam County Schools

Public relations seeks to bring about a harmony of understanding between any group and the public it serves and upon whose goodwill it depends [1].

Because schooling plays such a crucial role in individual and group well-being, ever since 1642, American citizens have exercised their right to participate in formulating educational policy. Knowing the values of active public interest and the dangers of dictatorship, educators have long endorsed the principle of public control and encouraged public participation. We continue to do so. And we know that support for schooling adequate for modern living involves widespread public awareness of new and ever more complex possibilities, relationships, and needs [2].

Although programs for the education of children with physical or mental handicaps is not a new concept, the passage of the Mandatory Education of the Handicapped Act has greatly expanded the legal responsibility of public educational agencies in an area which is commonly referred to as Special Education. The legal aspects of diagnosis and placement of handicapped children, along with requirements to provide special services for these children, makes it imperative that the general public be well informed about special education. This can be accomplished when school administrators and teachers strive to develop and maintain good public relations. Bucher states that public relations is getting the right facts to the right people at the right time and in the right way [3].

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The public should be well-informed about services available through special education which may be outside the regular classroom setting. Also, there should be an awareness that many students with handicapping conditions can be given special instruction within the regular classroom. This is known as mainstreaming.

The clientele for special education programs are pupils, parents, and the general public. When we seek to determine the right time for developing good public relations, we should think of this as an on-going process.

There are many ways in which good public relations can be developed. Some are: pupil-teacher relationships, parent-teacher groups, home visits by the teacher, parent visitation at school, planning groups involving non-school personnel within the community, releasing information through the news media, etc.

The contact which teachers have with pupils and parents is more important in molding public opinion than formal pronouncements and planned procedures. To most parents, the teacher's opinions and evaluations are very likely to be accepted as true because of his immediate role as the chief source of information concerning the school activities of the child. In this respect, well-informed, enthusiastic parents play a vital role in spreading information regarding school affairs and thus can cause favorable opinion toward the school program to be formed by the different publics [4].

Some of the best opportunities for promoting good relations with parents exist in working with parent-teacher organizations. A parent-teacher organization is a device which is designed to bring about better understanding between the parent and the teacher for the ultimate benefit of the child. Such an organization may be of tremendous value in building a better understanding between groups and individuals, and this, in the final analysis, is the principal goal of public relations [5].

Newspaper, radio, and television media are excellent means for making the outside world aware of the need for understanding the child and of the many ways the child is receiving or could be receiving an education. It is important that the external publics be thoroughly informed, and care should be exercised against any misunderstanding.

Another trend for gaining good public relations is to inform the teacher, the parent, and the community of services and programs through in-service training programs. The purpose of these programs is not just for awareness but also to secure involvement in determining the needs and objectives in the education of exceptional children. In-service of this nature should give new directions, increase knowledge of programs, and make for better techniques in programming. Teachers, parents, and the public should also gain a better

understanding of ways to cope with the problems of the handicapped or the exceptional child.

Finally, we should remember that a good program will sell itself. Therefore, every effort must be made by all concerned to insure that the best possible educational programs are implemented, with the exceptional child foremost in mind. A good program is a whole program for a whole child, with emphasis placed on the child and his needs; it is one which makes the child feel successful and happy and helps him develop a good self-conception of being useful. When the public can see these characteristics in the children we are educating, then we can be sure that a good public relationship has played a vibrant part in the maturity of the special education program.

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Closing the gap between our cultures is a necessity in the most abstract intellectual sense, as well as in the most practical. When these two senses have grown apart, then no society is going to be able to think with wisdom. For the sake of the intellectual life, for the sake of this country's special danger, for the sake of the Western society living precariously rich among the poor, for the sake of the poor who needn't be poor if there is intelligence in the world, it is obligatory for us and the Americans and the whole West to look at education with fresh eyes

Isn't it time we began? The danger is, we have been brought up to think though we have all the time in the world. We have very little time. So little that I dare not guess at it.

C. P. Snow

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF
THE SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS

by
Katherine B. Stanton
Director of Public Relations, Shelby County Schools

The Shelby County Board of Education administers a Department of Public Relations as a supplement to those of Administration, Special Services, Instruction, Pupil Services, and Finance. The title of the department head is that of Public Relations Director. The director must have a master's degree; be certified by the State of Tennessee Department of Education; have at least five years' successful experience in the teaching, administrative, or supervisory fields; and execute such alternatives to the above qualifications as the Board may find appropriate and acceptable.

The director reports directly to the superintendent of the schools.

The job goal of the department is to generate in the community at large a climate of understanding of Shelby County's efforts to provide each student with the best possible education in an increasingly complex and sophisticated world.

The performance responsibilities are varied and encompass many fields; however, emphasis is placed upon the personal contact of the director with the civic, social, and religious entities in the community.

The director attends the meetings of the Board of Education and prepares such reports for the Board as the superintendent may request. He prepares and maintains current the Board of Education Policy Manual.

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The department assists in developing internal communications by planning weekly staff meetings, organizing monthly principals' meetings, developing a school planning calendar, publishing a school directory, and assisting in the printing of a monthly news organ, The Bulletin Board. The latter is a publication centered around professional teacher activities.

External communications are effected through the use of media news releases, brochures, movie and slide presentations, and a monthly televised program. "The Shelby County Schools: Report" is a half-hour televised program beamed toward a parent-oriented audience. The "Report" portrays the many facets of the instructional program in the schools, both traditional and innovative. It is aired over the local educational television station and has a wide viewing audience.

The previously mentioned external communications are extremely important and must be the basis for any public relations program; however, it is the philosophy of this department that personal contact with the community by the director is as essential as any other component of the program. The department acts as a resource for civic, educational, and religious groups and maintains a speakers' bureau for these same organizations. The director serves in an advisory capacity for such community endeavors as the PTA, YWCA, United Way, Health Careers, Shelby County Environmental Improvement Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce.

In advance of the opening of schools in the fall, it is the responsibility of the department to coordinate an Orientation Day for new teachers at which time the several departments have an opportunity to explain their procedures and practices.

The director produces certificates of commendation for retiring professional and non-professional personnel as well as outstanding lay persons. In addition to the certificates, many letters of commendation are sent to persons who have distinguished themselves in some manner.

It is the responsibility of the department to develop and maintain citizen advisory committees for the various federally funded programs in the school system.

A self-evaluation of the department is made yearly and submitted to the superintendent for constructive comments.

The public relations department of any school system of necessity must be many faceted. In addition to being completely knowledgeable of all school functions it must thoroughly understand the community which the schools serve and it must maintain open two-way communications.

CREATING PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND PUBLIC SUPPORT

by

Dr. James E. Thomas, Superintendent

and

Mary J. Harrison, Supervisor of Public Relations
Bristol, Tennessee, City School System

History records disagreement over many issues which have hampered the efforts of governments, institutions, and individuals whenever progress or changes appeared to be necessary. Someone has said that "every change that has been made by man was an outgrowth of one individual's thinking." Opposition and refusal of some to consider another point of view based on the merits of another's point of view continues to delay progress in some areas of educational growth.

To resolve these differences, the superintendent of any school district must become aware of the responsibilities placed in the position and provide leadership in developing a school-community philosophy, selection of personnel, research, and in-service training for the staff and Board of Education. When the chief executive officer is employed for the first time in this position, his background and experience should have been and probably has involved this kind of planning for the future. One accepting this position must realize that an individual new to a community may by necessity be the first to have the responsibility of altering the above. However, many of the individual's basic principles need not be changed; only a different approach needs to be explored. These areas must come before we get to the critical areas such as news media, public understanding, public support, working with school boards, teacher organizations, and community organizations.

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MARY J. HARRISON is a graduate of East Tennessee State University and has served as teacher, IGE Unit Leader, and Supervisor of Public Relations since 1971. She is editor of Vision Newsletter and director of the "Meet Your Bristol Tennessee Schools" broadcast over Radio Station WOPI.

Today's educational leader is in the public eye in every way every day. The "Sunshine Law" puts the policy maker and educational leader on stage with any issue or problem that may arise. Working in the public eye is a difficult task. Those who have dealt with the task and remained in the top level positions have been able to develop a relationship with the news media whereby discussion can be held and information delayed until sufficient evidence can be obtained for public release. To build and maintain confidence with the news media, it is a must for an individual to be honest at all times. Rumors come and go each day. To combat these rumors the educational leader must be able to answer the question or know where to seek the answer and clear the rumor. The school administrator who becomes defensive, insular, protective, or hostile will not survive the leadership imperatives.

A large amount of literature directed toward the development of an effective public relations program in school systems concerns itself with the more or less mechanical considerations of a well written article, an interesting media presentation, or the like. One subject that seldom receives extensive treatment is the impact of the news once it is disseminated into the school or community, yet this should always be a primary consideration when determining what is "news."

The chief executive of any school system needs assistance from many sources to develop the kind of an organization that will communicate the total school program to the community. I once heard a superintendent say, "I have six hard working men--they taught me all I know. Their names are: What, Where, Who, Why, When, and How." This idea utilized in most situations will produce effective relations with most groups and communities. After all is said and done, this is an American tradition where democracy still prevails. The chief executive must be concerned with the role of the Board of Education. The Board's responsibilities and decisions must be made on information provided from many sources as it relates to community relations, curriculum, school policies, evaluation of schools, staff and Board relations, personnel, finance (local, state, federal), school plant facilities, new and renovated facilities, and out-of-school hour activities. Some of us may be prone to hold deep dark secrets within our own confines, yet the community may be aware of back door decisions that should be thrown out for their consumption and discussion.

The problem may manifest itself in many often unexpected areas. A recent example occurred while editing a quarterly newsletter. Several teachers had submitted a picture and article detailing the activities of a new organization. After a cursory examination, we decided the article was well written and deserved publication. Later, through conversation with a colleague regarding the article, we realized the explosive potential such an article might carry. From an objective standpoint, the formation of this group was legitimate news; however, at a time when the activities of teachers in similar groups throughout the nation are experiencing strong public criticism, the wisdom of imparting

this news through a school system paper might be questioned. The public seldom draws the critical distinction between items objectively reported and ideas advocated. Publication of such an article might create the impression that the school system had given its imprimatur to the activities of an organization that may espouse objectives contrary to the best interests of the system itself. This problem was created not by the news item but by the selection of the particular medium through which it was to be conveyed. It is typical of the subtle consideration that accompanies disseminating news to the public.

Another consideration relative to the choice of media to be utilized in school-community relations concerns the intended recipients of the information to be disseminated. It is important to determine which member (or members) of the media will be most likely to reach the desired audience. This becomes of particular significance in Tennessee with reference to the 1974 "Sunshine Law." The law declares that "All meetings of any governing body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times . . ." The Sunshine Law imposes a duty on the school system to adequately inform the public, in advance, of the date, time, and location of all meetings coming within the ambit of this act. Failure to comply with the standards enumerated results in the imposition of severe sanctions. It is in this context that choice of media becomes important in determining what is adequate notice. If the vehicle selected to convey the required information does not reach a significant percentage of the community, it is possible that the school system will be vulnerable, if challenged under the "adequate notice requirement."

Although much of the "Sunshine Law" remains to be interpreted, it seems fairly clear that the statute is applicable to regular school board meetings. This poses an additional problem for school administrators desiring an effective relationship with members of the media. Board meetings often entail matters not directly in the community interest but capable of causing great embarrassment if publicized. It is the responsibility of the system's public relations representative to have such material deleted from news reports whenever possible. Reporters often find it difficult to resist incorporating sensational news to glamorize an otherwise dull story. As a practical matter, the only restraint school officials can exercise over the information disseminated is by virtue of the working relationship they have developed with those who report the news.

The term "working relationship" has a special meaning in this context. Newspersons who have been continually subjected to a "stone wall" when seeking information unfavorable to the school system may tend to be very independent once they latch on to a "hot item." Through past conduct, school officials have honed the reporter's investigative reporting inclinations for just such a moment. To have a good "working relationship" with members of the media, it is essential that they can expect a free flow of information, good and bad, from persons within the system. Once such an association has developed, the individual reporters will be more receptive to suggestions as to the content of

their articles because of the value they attach to the continuance of what they regard as a beneficial relationship.

Quite appropriately, it is only by compliance with the full disclosure spirit of the "Sunshine Law" that school administrators may be able to limit its potentially adverse effects.

* * *

"Verily, verily, I say unto you: unless you are understood, you have not spoken; and unless you understand, you have not heard."

John O. Goodman

"The Parable of Understanding"

Beta Delta News

March, 1951

" . . . with all thy getting get understanding."